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THE MEANING OF THE TERMS: 'EXISTENCE' AND 'REALITY'

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A DISSERTATION

SUBMITTED TO THE BOARD OF UNIVERSITY STUDIES OF THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY IN CONFORMITY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

BY

ALVIN THALHEIMER

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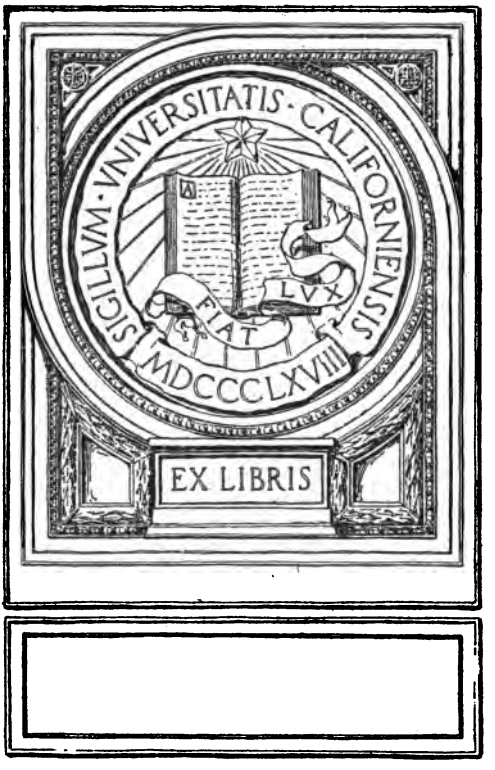
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CHAPTER I

The Need for a Definition of "Existence" and "Reality."

Not long ago it was characteristic of philosophers to deal with the world as a whole. To determine the fundamental nature of the heterogeneous experience with which we are confronted, to draw unity out of diversity, was supposed to be the business of philosophy. All the world was found to be "will" or "intellect" or "spirit," and a way was thereby opened by which the individual was enabled to feel at home in his environment and in sympathy with it. The aim of philosophy was to discover the fundamental character of "reality in general," and at the same time to offer consolation to the individual by showing that the world fundamentally is akin to himself.

But now, if we cannot say that all this has been changed, we can at least note a strong movement in a different direction. We can note a tendency to consider the parts before the whole, to use James's phraseology; a tendency to busy ourselves with some specific part of the world and to let the world as a whole take care of itself. Specific problems, we find, have become interesting and worthy of attention for their own sake. Less value is being put upon the broad vision necessary for synthesis and generalization, and more value upon the exercise of keen and concentrated intellectual effort of the sort that is required for analysis. To this renewed interest in analysis the movement known as neo-realism has offered the most organized support. But the method of analysis is by no means tied up with one epistemological doctrine or with one theory of consciousness. It is the method of all those, and their number seems to be growing, who are interested in specific problems for their own sake, who do not consider all philosophizing merely a means to some generalization as to the nature of the universe, and who rate high among the charms of philosophy the alertness required to dissect intricate concepts and to avoid lurking confusions.

It is as an attempt at such analysis that the present dissertation is conceived. We are frequently asserting of some

entity that it exists or that it does not exist. What then does it mean to "exist"? That is the question with which we are to deal. And we are to deal with it without concern for the future of our souls. We are to deal with it by concentrating our attention upon the concept "existence," by analyzing out various senses in which the term has been used, and by making each of these senses of the word definite, precise, and meaningful.

Indeed, if we are to come to close quarters with any concept, "existence" is the one that requires our attention. For we have here a concept that is particularly important in our judgments. In nearly everything we say we are implicitly saying something about existence. Except for a few classes of judgments, each judgment we make is an assertion of the existence or of the non-existence of some entity; it is an assertion, that is to say, that can be turned into an existential proposition. It has sometimes been said that whenever we make a judgment we imply the existence of the subject of that judgment. But that this is not the case it has not been hard to show. We need only think of an hypothetical proposition of the form: If A is, B is. Here neither A nor B is said to exist, but the existence of B is said to be contingent upon the existence of A. Exactly the same interpretation holds when the proposition is thrown into the categorical form: A implies B. And since perhaps the most important judgments we have are judgments of this latter form, judgments in which the existence of the subject is not asserted, we cannot accept the thesis that in all judgments the existence of the subject is assumed. But though it cannot be maintained that a judgment assumes the existence of its subject, it does not follow that judgments as a rule have no existential import. Indeed, nearly all propositions, it seems to me, can be turned into propositions having a reference to existence. And it may be worth while to show this in some detail in order that the importance of the concept "existence" may be realized.

Let us start with the proposition: "Some men are bald." Here I am asserting the existence, not only of men, but of bald men. "Bald men exist" is exactly equivalent to "Some men are bald." There is the same assertion of existence when the particular proposition is negative. "Some men are not patriotic" means that some unpatriotic men exist.

In most particular propositions, consequently, we are making assertions that are equivalent to assertions of existence. Singular judgments, on the other hand, are, if they are negative, equivalent to assertions of non-existence. "George is not at home today" means that a George who has the quality of being home today is a non-existent entity. When I think of such a George I am thinking of something that doesn't exist. And when I assert that George is not at home today I am asserting the non-existence of this object. In the case of affirmative singular propositions there is a two-fold reference to existence. Suppose, for example, I make the judgment: "John Smith is now eating his dinner." I mean that a John Smith who is now eating his dinner is a real object; when I think of such a John Smith I am thinking of an existing entity. And a John Smith who is not now eating his dinner is a myth, a non-existent entity. When I lay down the affirmative singular proposition: A is B, I am asserting that the A which is B is an existing entity, and that the A which is not B is a non-existing entity. And I am saying nothing more than this. It is in this way, then, that we find the existential import of most particular and singular propositions. Particular propositions are exactly equivalent to assertions of existence. Negative singular propositions are exactly equivalent to assertions of non-existence. And affirmative singular propositions are equivalent to propositions that attribute existence to one entity and non-existence to another.

With universal propositions the transformation is slightly more involved. Suppose my judgment is that all men are mortal. Then what my judgment amounts to is the assertion that immortal men do not exist. To attribute mortality to all men is to attribute non-existence to the class of immortal men. When, on the other hand, I say: "No stone is alive," my assertion means that living stones do not exist. With these examples of Brentano's[1] I quite agree. I believe Brentano is correct in holding that universal categorical propositions, and hypothetical propositions that can be thrown into categorical form, may be transformed into assertions of non-existence. When we say "2 and 2 are 4,"

[1] Brentano—*Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkte*, 1874, vol. 1, p. 283.

I think we mean that a collection of two entities together with two other entities such that the collection does not contain four entities is a non-existent object. And I think that there is nothing more that the proposition in question does mean. A proposition of this kind does not assert that the subject exists; but it does, nevertheless, make some assertion about existence, or, rather, about non-existence. It may be, as Holt says, that most propositions are about entities that do not physically exist.[2] But it does not follow that the distinction between existence and non-existence—in some sense of "existence"—makes no difference to these propositions. It may be, as G. E. Moore says, that 2 and 2 are 4 "whether there exist two things or not."[3] But it does not follow that mathematics is a non-existential science, if we mean by a non-existential science one that has no use for the concepts "existence" and "non-existence" in any of their senses. Indeed, if "non-existential" is defined in this manner, an existential science is precisely what mathematics is. And not only mathematics but almost all scientific propositions, and indeed almost all judgments, are existential.

Of course, it may be said that these categorical propositions are not equivalent to propositions asserting non-existence in general, but to propositions asserting non-existence in some definite realm, as, for example, in the realm of mathematics. But at least they assert non-existence of some sort. Let us then be content with this for the present. We have shown that almost all propositions are equivalent to propositions asserting existence or non-existence of some sort. We have shown that existence is a vitally necessary concept, that no science can hope to escape a reference to it. The distinction between various realms of existence we shall consider later on.

Our thesis is not that all propositions are equivalent to propositions asserting existence or non-existence, for there are some propositions of which this is not true. When the proposition with which we are dealing defines a word, the meaning of this proposition will not be exhausted if we transform it into the existential proposition into which we should normally transform it. If a pentagon is a plane

[2] Holt: The Concept of Consciousness, p. 65.

[3] G. E. Moore: The Nature of Judgment; "Mind," N. S. vol. 8, (1899), p. 180.

figure bounded by five straight lines, no doubt a pentagon that is not a plane figure bounded by five straight lines does not exist. But the proposition in which the word "pentagon" is first introduced means more than this. Something similar might no doubt be said of such a proposition as: "this is a rose," where the meaning of the word "rose" is given by pointing out one of the objects to which it refers. A more important limitation, however, that must be put upon the theory that has preceded, comes when we are dealing with predications of existence and of the concepts that are prior to existence. When existence is explicitly predicated of an entity, there is no reference to existence other than that which is explicit. If we were to transform "All A's exist" as we have transformed "All A's are B," we should find ourselves saying: "A's that do not exist do not exist"; and we should be involved in a hopeless regress of tautological propositions. Similarly when we predicate "non-existence", or a term equivalent to "non-existence", there is no reference to existence other than that which is explicit. Again, in dealing with the predication of concepts prior to the distinction between existence and non-existence, this reference to existence cannot be found. Let us call "subsistence" that which may be predicated of any entity. Then subsistence and the qualities in terms of which existence is defined are prior to existence. When I attribute one of these qualities to an entity, there can be no reference to existence; otherwise we could never open our mouths without being presumed already to know the meaning of existence.

Before leaving this subject perhaps I ought to show how I should meet an objection that might be raised against the theory that has been put forth. I have said that particular propositions and affirmative singular propositions imply the assertion of existence. It may be objected, consequently, that propositions such as: " Some Greek Gods acted immorally" and "Ivanhoe lived under the Plantagenets" make no assertion of existence. It seems to me, however, that such propositions, taken in the usual sense of their terms, do make this assertion of existence, and, since what they assert to have existed did not exist, these propositions are false. If they are meant to be true, they are worded incorrectly. The one about Ivanhoe should read: "Ivanhoe is a

fictitious character who is supposed to have lived under the Plantagenets." In this proposition, however, there is no assertion of existence according to the theory I am defending; for we are dealing with one of the cases that have been expressly excepted. We are dealing with a case in which non-existence is explicitly being predicated; for to call Ivanhoe a fictitious character is to call him non-existent.

Apart from the classes of propositions that have been excepted, all categorical propositions can be transformed, and transformed without loss of meaning, into assertions of existence or of non-existence. And since most of the judgments we make are of this form or can be put into this form, we see that we are engaged for the most part in making assertions that are equivalent to existential judgments. In science, in mathematics, in daily life, the propositions with which we deal are equivalent to propositions asserting existence or non-existence of some kind. Our knowledge is built up of propositions that are equivalent to existential propositions. And so, though we do not always mention the word "existence," the assertion or denial of existence is implied in nearly all of the propositions with which we usually concern ourselves.

"Existence" consequently is a most important word. The term we may avoid mentioning, but the concept will be lurking in the background. We may attempt to develop a doctrine that shall be purely a *Gegenstandstheorie,* but as soon as we advance beyond the most fundamental concepts, our assertions will be equivalent to assertions predicating an existence or non-existence of some sort. A concept so important in our thinking certainly merits our attention. And it merits our attention all the more because its meaning is so vague and chaotic. When we first ask ourselves what the difference is between an entity that exists and one that does not, no clear and unambiguous answer comes to our minds. We seem to be given no additional information about an entity when we are told that it exists. Indeed there have been many writers who have said that to think of an entity and to think of it as existing is one and the same thing. They have been able to put forward such a thesis because the word as we first meet it seems to be almost completely without meaning. If we look to the ordinary usage of words to solve our problem, we look in vain. We can

find little meaning in the word simply by observing how it is used in our every-day language, for in common speech the word "existence" is applied in a most haphazard manner. We look through a microscope and we say that what we see exists; we press our eyeballs and we say that what we see does not exist. In both cases we are supplementing our native powers of observation and gaining an experience that contradicts the experience we gain through exercising our unaided vision. The two operations have nearly all characteristics in common. And yet we say that the one operation puts us in contact with existing entities and the other with non-existing entities. As to the existence of other entities, such as God, we find the greatest diversity of opinion. And we find little more than the dogmatic assertion of existence, or the equally dogmatic assertion of non-existence. We find no simple definition of existence by the application of which we might tell whether God does, or does not, exist.

The use of the term is in the highest degree chaotic. Two entities may stand in practically the same position with regard to all the marks that we might take to be marks of existence; and yet one may customarily be called existent and the other non-existent. Furthermore, the term at first sight lacks meaning to such an extent that the proposition: "the Pope exists" is only slightly more informative than the proposition: "the Pope is an Abracadabra"; that is to say, "existence" is almost as meaningless a predicate as the typically meaningless term Abracadabra. It is evident, consequently, that if the term is to be used at all, it must be defined. The concept which it represents must be given some more definite meaning; it must be rendered richer in content. It is this that we shall attempt to do. We shall try to find out what some of the more important philosophers have meant by "existence" when they have used the term. And as a result of such historical inquiries we shall see what may be said as to the way in which the term may or should be defined.

When we come to consider the term "existence," there are a whole host of related terms that come to mind. There are "essence," "being," "subsistence," and "reality" in English; *"Sein," "Dasein," "Wirklichkeit,"* and *"Realität"* in German; and a similar array of terms in other languages.

"Essence," I suppose, may be described as that part of an entity which remains when we remove existence from the concept of it. It is a term that should be quite easily distinguished from "existence," and so will cause us little concern. To be sure, in the writings of some philosophers, notably in the case of Spinoza, the relation between essence and existence offers difficulty. But the source of confusion is the failure to give "existence" a definite and limited meaning; when "existence" is made meaningful, it is not difficult to see what is meant by "essence."

"Subsistence" is a term that has recently become popular. And deservedly; for it is a term that is quite serviceable. It is that which may be predicated of any entity, of an existing entity as well as of a non-existing one. "Being" is frequently used in the same sense. For example, Russell[4] says: " 'Being' is that which belongs to every conceivable term, to every possible object of thought—in short, to everything that can possibly occur in any proposition, true or false, and to all such propositions themselves . . . Numbers, the Homeric Gods, relations, chimeras and four dimensional spaces all have being, for if they were not entities of a kind, we could make no propositions about them. Thus being is a general attribute of everything, and to mention anything is to show that it is." It is in this sense that I shall use "being;" I shall treat it as a synonym of "subsistence." And when I find it given a more limited scope, I shall assume that the writer with whom I am dealing is talking about what I am calling "existence."

Existence is not the same thing as subsistence or being. If it were, non-existence would, of course, be a self-contradiction; it would be as impossible to think: "Jupiter does not exist" as it is to think: "Jupiter does not subsist." And yet we frequently find assertions that imply just this identification of existence and subsistence. According to Hume, "there is no impression nor idea of any kind of which we have any consciousness or memory, that is not conceived as existent."[5] Existence, accordingly, is a predicate that belongs to any object of which we may think. It belongs to the centaur just as subsistence does. And just as a non-subsisting object is a self-contradiction, so, it would seem,

[4] Russell: Principles of Mathematics, vol. 1, p. 449.
[5] Hume: Treatise of Human Nature; Bk. 1, Pt. 2, Sec. 6.

is a non-existing one. "Existence," in short, comes to be equivalent to "subsistence." Now, when we are engaged in introspection, we seem to find some basis for making "existence" as broad in extension as "subsistence," and as devoid of intention as the latter is. "Existence" is a rather meaningless word as we first meet it, and adds almost nothing to the concept to which it is joined. But it is not to be assumed that "existence" is to be left in this condition. We have enough words to act as universal predicates; "existence" should be redeemed and rendered definite.

Indeed, it is usually recognized that "existence" is not to be attributed to everything. And so we are only following customary modes of speech when we say that some entities exist and others do not exist. However, not only is it customary for "existence" to be given a limited application; it is absolutely necessary that "existence," or some term like it, have a limited application if we are to have any knowledge at all. For nearly all of the propositions we use can, as we have seen, be transformed into existential propositions. If now to attribute existence to an entity is to attribute nothing, or nothing specific, to it, all of these existential propositions are meaningless. And some of them become worse, for those in which non-existence is predicated of some entity come to be self-contradictory. Knowledge depends, consequently, on the use of a concept like "existence" that shall be a quality of only some entities and not of all. We must, therefore, reject the view that identifies "existence" with "subsistence." "Subsistence" or "being" is one thing, and "existence" is another.

Of the other terms I have mentioned it is hard to distinguish one from another. There have been attempts to distinguish "existence" from "reality," but the majority of writers I have examined make no clear distinction between the two. In German, where there are the four terms: *"Existenz," "Dasein," "Wirklichkeit,"* and *"Realität,"* there have been similar attempts.[6] But the result has been merely a collection of verbal distinctions that finds no justification in the previous history of these words. I shall, therefore, group them all together and shall use "existence" and "reality" interchangeably. I shall be dealing with the con-

[6] Friedrichs: *Beiträge zu einer Geschichte und Theorie des Existential-urteils,* p. 13.

cepts that are called concepts of "existence," those that are called concepts of "reality," and those that are called concepts of "being," where "being" does not mean mere subsistence. And I shall call them, now concepts of "existence," and now concepts of "reality." If, in the absence of any generally recognized distinction between these terms, I were to be especially careful which term each individual author preferred to use, I should be laying too much stress on peculiarities of terminology. And I should end by drawing up a list of senses in which "reality" has been used that would almost exactly duplicate a list of senses in which "existence" has been used. For me, then, "existence" means "reality," and "reality" means "existence." And the concepts which I shall principally be engaged in discussing, I shall call now by one name and now by the other.

It is settled, then, that we shall talk about "existence" or "reality," and that what we shall mean by these terms will not be mere subsistence. We may be asked, however, with what sort of existence we are concerned. There is existence in the realm of mathematics, existence in the realm of scientific theories, existence in the physical world, existence merely in thought. We shall be told, in short, that "existence" is a term that by itself is quite incomplete. Whenever we predicate existence, we must predicate existence *in some realm,* if our assertion is to be useful. All entities exist, but they do not exist in the same realm. Therefore, it is nothing to predicate existence, but it is useful to predicate existence in some specific realm. Zeus does not exist in the physical world; he does exist in Greek mythology. Consequently, when we read "Zeus exists," we do not know whether the proposition is true or false, for we do not know what realm of existence is understood. If the world of Greek mythology is referred to, the proposition is true; if it is the physical world that is meant, it is false. At times some of these realms of existence are graded according to their importance. Fritz Medicus,[7] in dealing with mathematical objects, distinguishes between the realm of concrete objects, the realm of abstract objects, and the realm of pure extension. To say that an entity does not

[7] Medicus: *Bemerkungen zum Problem der Existenz mathematischer Gegenstände; Kantstudien,* 1914, p. 1.

exist is to assert that it exists only in a realm lower down on the scale than that realm about which we are talking. If we say the number two does not exist, we mean that it does not exist in the realm of concrete entities, but has only an abstract existence. If we say four-dimensional space does not exist, we mean that it does not exist in the realm of abstract entities, but belongs only in the realm of pure extension. At other times the various realms of existence are not graded. It is insisted that existence is always relative to some realm of entities, to some "universe of discourse" or "situation," but there is no attempt to compare these various "universes of discourse" and these various "situations."

There is for F. H. Bradley this multiplicity of worlds. There is for him "my present actual world, and the ambiguous existence of what has been and is about to be. There are the worlds of duty and of religious truth, which on the one side penetrate and on the other side transcend the common visible facts. . . . Above the sensible sphere rises the intellectual province of truth and science, and, more or less apart from this, the whole realm of the higher imagination. Both in poetry and in general fiction, and throughout the entire region of the arts and of artistic perception, we encounter reality. . . . Because there are many worlds, the idea which floats suspended above one of them is attached to another. . . . And hence when an idea floats above, or is even repelled by, one region of the world, there is available always another region in which it inheres and to which as an adjective it is attached."[8] There is, in short, always some world, some universe of discourse, in which a given entity is real.

It must be admitted that there is something attractive in this view. It enables us to go behind any question as to an entity's existence by making a distinction. We can say: "In one realm it exists; in the other it does not exist." And this usage finds some support in everyday language. We do say of a lunatic that his million dollars exist in his head. But in our ordinary speech we also recognize an existence that is absolute existence. If we ask the man in the street whether the lunatic's million dollars exist, he will answer immediately that they do not exist. He will not ask

[8] F. H. Bradley: Essays on Truth and Reality, pp. 31-32.

us to specify which realm of existence we are discussing. And when we talk about various realms of existence, there is always one realm of existence that stands out as *the* realm of existence; there is always one universe of discourse that is the universe of *real* objects. So, indeed, it is with Bradley. There is, he recognizes,[9] a sense in which "the regions of hope, desire and dream, madness and drunkenness and error" are all unreal; or else real to only a slight extent, real to only a limited degree.[10] For above these worlds of unreal, or only partially real, entities, there is for him a realm of reality in which there is absolute reality. As a matter of fact, we only obfuscate the question as to an entity's existence, and make a solution more remote, when we talk about various realms of existence. When we ask whether an entity exists, we are asking whether it exists in the universe of real objects; existence that is merely existence in thought or in pure extension does not concern us. And it is to be noticed that when we insist on taking into account various realms of existence, the question as to the meaning of existence is not solved, but is replaced by a host of new questions. We have now to ask what is meant by existence in the realm of physical objects, what by existence in the realm of mathematical objects, what by existence in the realm of mental objects, and what by existence in the realm of science. It seems to be wisest, consequently, to concentrate our attention upon one question, to ask what it means to exist in the one realm that is most important, in the realm in which all real objects exist. If we do otherwise, we disperse our attention and are likely to content ourselves with specious distinctions that do not offer a solution but merely cover up the difficulty.

I shall be engaged in the main, therefore, in considering what it means to exist absolutely, to exist in general. When we assert that a collection of two entities and two other entities that is not a collection of four entities does not exist —and this is what I have said the assertion that two and two are four comes to—it is about this sort of existence, it seems to me, that we are talking. We are saying that such a combination does *not* exist absolutely, in the way in which the world of Platonic ideas or the luminiferous

[9] *Ibid*, p. 31.
[10] F. H. Bradley: Appearance and Reality, ch. 24.

ether has been asserted to exist absolutely. It is possible, of course, to say that what is asserted of such a combination is non-existence in the realm of mathematical entities. But it seems to me unnecessary always to be bringing in a reference to some particular universe of discourse. Existence in an absolute sense can, we shall see, be made meaningful. And when this has been done we can determine how many realms of existence are to be recognized and what each of these types of existence is to mean. After all, they are all species of one existence that is absolute existence. And if we insist on always being mindful of these various species, we complicate our subject unnecessarily. I shall, consequently, consider all assertions of existence merely as assertions of an absolute existence. Existence of some kind, and, consequently, absolute existence, is implicitly being predicated in nearly all judgments. Notwithstanding this fact, existence as generally used is quite deficient in meaning. It follows that this state of affairs must be remedied, that we must learn what absolute existence is, in order that these judgments may be meaningful.

In order, too, that we may solve those questions that are explicitly questions of existence, we must know what absolute existence is. Let me suppose that as I walk along a road I see something lying on the ground ahead of me that I take to be a snake. As I approach nearer, I conclude that I was mistaken and that what lies on the ground is really a piece of cord. I am interested in determining what really is there. Is it a snake or a piece of cord? When, now, I ask myself whether or not a snake is really there and whether or not a piece of cord is really there, I am dealing with the same question. I am dealing with the same alternative: snake or cord? For to decide in favor of the cord is to judge that the snake that seems to be there is unreal and the cord that seems to be there real. Whenever we ask *what* is real, we are asking *whether* some seeming entity is real. And whenever we ask *whether* an entity is real, we are asking *what* is real. For when the question is answered in the affirmative the content of reality is different from what it is when the question is answered in the negative. To ask whether an entity is real is consequently no less prac-

tical and no more artificial than to ask what is real.[11] To answer either we need to know what it means to be real. We cannot tell whether an entity deserves the predicate "real" unless we know the meaning of this predicate. And we cannot determine the content of reality without reality being a meaningful term. It is quite necessary, then, that the term be made meaningful. And this task of making explicit its meaning—or rather its meanings—is the one to which we are to address ourselves.

[11] Dewey: Essays in Experimental Logic, p. 8, note.

CHAPTER II

The Real as the Permanent

No question in Occidental philosophy, so far as we know, is older than this question: What is it to be real? It was recognized from the start that in it lies the beginning of philosophical wisdom. For when the Milesians looked out and found themselves confronted by a world of infinite variety and ceaseless change, they asked themselves what the meaning, the "nature," of all this is. That is to say, they asked what is fundamental and "real" in all this heterogeneity. They desired to separate out the wheat from the chaff, to find out what truly exists, so that they might cling to this and disregard the rest. For, as long as we occupy ourselves with illusory objects we have no knowledge; it is only when we limit our attention to objects that are "real" that we can build up knowledge and science. This fundamental truth was recognized in the early stages of Greek philosophy; and so these early Greeks set about finding out which one or more of the objects confronting them was "real."

The real for them is that which is permanent and abiding. "As Anaximandros and most of the physicists say," it is that which "is immortal and indestructible."[12] It is that "of which all things consist, the antecedent from which they have sprung and into which they are finally resolved."[13] That which is permanent and enduring alone is real; the rest is mere unintelligible becoming. This is the interpretation that has been put upon these Ionics by Aristotle and most subsequent philosophy. There have been some,[14] however, who have asserted that what these Milesians wanted to know when they inquired into the "nature of things" was not the permanent entity underlying all the changing ones, but was the origin of, and process implicit in, the changing world we usually have before us. They are said

[12] Aristotle: *Phys.* iii, 4; 203b 7.

[13] Aristotle: *Met.* i, 3; 983b 6.

[14] Woodbridge: The Dominant Conception of the Earliest Greek Philosophy; *Philosophical Review*, vol. 10 (1901), p. 359.

to have wanted to know how the world works, how and whence becoming becomes. But they are more usually held to have been engaged in inquiring into the nature of the permanent fact amid so much change, in attempting to discover the underlying reality which—as real—must be permanent. However that may be, when we come to Parmenides we meet the clear and unequivocal assertion that that which is "real" is permanent and abiding. His muse tells him: "There is left but this single path to tell thee of: namely, that being is. And on this path there are many proofs that being is without beginning and indestructible; it is universal, existing alone, immovable and without end; nor ever was it, nor will it be, since it now *is*, altogether, one and continuous."[15] Other entities appear and then vanish; that which is real persists forever. It is in this sense that "reality" is used, not only by Parmenides, but by almost all the Pre-Socratic philosophers. From Parmenides to Anaxagoras the real is that which persists unchanged, unaffected by the lapse of time. There is disagreement as to the number of such permanent entities and the qualities that they possess, but there is no one to deny that whenever such permanent entities are found they are to be called "real." We have here in the concept of permanence, consequently, what so far as we can determine is the original meaning of the term "reality." All other meanings of "real" have supervened upon it and are probably in some way derived from it.

But why should such unanimity give way to subsequent diversity? Primarily it is because "permanence" and its antithesis "change," like most concepts, are subject to analysis, and on analysis they each yield new meanings which are not equivalent to one another. Some particular kind of permanence is hit upon, and reality is made to consist of entities that have as an attribute this sort of permanence; or some particular kind of change is hit upon, and unreality is made an attribute of entities that exhibit this sort of change. One way in which an entity can change is by appearing in one form to one person and then appearing in a changed form to another. And so entities that in this way change their appearance from person to person, or

[15] Parmenides: On Nature, vv. 57–63.

change the way in which they appear to the same person from time to time, come to be called unreal. They are not permanent; they vary from subject to subject and from time to time. Consequently they are unreal. Quite early does relativity thus come to mean unreality. "By use there is sweet," says Democritus, "by use there is bitter; by use there is warm, and by use there is cold; by use there is color. But in sooth there are atoms and the void."[16] Now when permanence has come to mean freedom from this sort of relativity its meaning has changed. What we usually think of as permanence is a quality in the object itself and has no relation to the number of ways in which the object is perceived. And so when reality is limited to objects with this new sort of permanence, the term is being used in a new sense.

Or, again, permanence is made to consist in a sort of logical permanence, in immutability of attributes. An entity cannot be permanent if it has a quality that varies according to the entity with which it is compared. A tall man, to be permanent and real, must always be tall; he cannot be tall as compared with one man and short as compared with another. "Six," to be real, must always be "more by a half;" it cannot be "more by a half" as compared with four and "less by a half" as compared with twelve.[17] Such an opinion is sometimes attributed to Protagoras. He and other Sophists are sometimes said to have held all entities unreal whose qualities are in this sense relative. For them, that is to say, there were included among unreal entities those with this sort of relativity.

Cleavage along another line is more fundamental. Two very different senses of "real" are the natural result of two very different senses of permanence. In one sense an entity is permanent that persists through time, that exhibits a perdurance that knows no end. But using the word in another sense, entities have been called permanent that are entirely outside the realm of time. Being entities to which time is not applicable, they too are free from change and in this sense permanent. During the greater part of Greek philosophy permanence means perdurance. The permanent and real entities are those that were at the start and will

[16] Democritus, fr. 125.

[17] Plato: Theaetatus, 154, 157–160.

continue forever. But the "Being" of Parmenides abides in the sense that it is out of time entirely. From the "Timaeus" also we can derive the notion of a Being to whom time is not applicable. And it is this timeless sort of permanence that, partly as a result of the "Timaeus," was conceived by some of the Schoolmen to be an attribute of real Being. The essence of reality, however, cannot be both perdurance and timelessness. The two concepts are at war with one another. We are face to face with two contradictory notions of what it is to be permanent and real. "Real" is applied, now exclusively to those entities that perdure, now exclusively to those that are timeless. When it is used to point to perduring entities alone, the timeless ones are unreal, for they manifestly do not perdure. This is one of the points Plato makes against the timeless Being of Parmenides. It is unreal because it is not in time as an entity must be to be real.[18] When, on the other hand, "real" points to timeless entities alone, the perduring ones are unreal. The two senses quite evidently are mutually exclusive.

And so "reality" has come to mean very different things. Used in one sense it is equivalent to timelessness; used in another it is equivalent to perdurance through time. Furthermore, the meaning of permanence is often modified so that what we have in mind is not the unchanging character of the object in itself, but the stability and permanence of its relations to the sentient organism or to other entities. As we have seen, at times entities that appear differently from subject to subject are called unreal and at times entities with qualities that vary, entities with relative qualities, are unreal. But while some have identified reality with permanence when its meaning is modified in one of these two ways, others have identified reality with permanence taken in its normal sense. That is, they have meant by a permanent entity one that, regardless of the changes in its relations, is itself unaffected by the lapse of time. And using "real" in this sense, the relativity of sense-perceptions is no sign of unreality. Everything depends upon the sense in which the word is being used.

Let us suppose that by permanence we mean this intrinsic permanence, and that it is with this that we are identifying

[18] Plato: Parmenides, 141, 152.

reality. Which, then, are the entities that we are calling "real"? It is possible that our antithesis between the permanent and the impermanent refers to a distinction among the objects of our perception. Mountains, rocks and towering trees seem to last indefinitely. They are there to greet our vision whenever we turn our eyes their way. But frail flowers and beautiful sunsets must be enjoyed when they are given, for they are short-lived and soon pass away. It is possible, accordingly, that we are using "real" to point to the mountains and "unreal" to point to the sunsets. But if we use these words in this way, we are, it seems to me, diverging quite far from the usage of common speech. There is to-day, so far as I can judge, no tendency in common speech to call mountains real rather than sunsets, and Gothic cathedrals real rather than soap bubbles. It is not only, however, that such a definition of reality would give the term an unusual meaning. The more serious objection is that such a definition is as yet by no means precise. For there is no sharp distinction between short-lived entities and long-lived entities; on the contrary, there is a gradual transition from the lightning flashes and soap bubbles to the mountains and stars. Consequently, permanence is, after all, relative; and to say merely that an entity to be real must be permanent is not to tell us just how long an entity must last to be real and just how evanescent it must be to be unreal. It is a definition, in short, that cannot be applied with any definiteness and precision.

But when we contrast the permanent with the impermanent, we may not be pointing to the qualities that are given us in perception. Instead we may be referring to a "substance" that stands behind these qualities. This substance may be conceived to be permanent, and, since permanence means reality, this substance may be conceived to be real. With a view of this kind we can associate the name of Herbert Spencer. For Spencer objects consist of qualities that change and an unsensed substratum that endures. "The most conspicuous contrast presented in the vivid aggregate as a whole, as well as in each of its parts," he says, "is the contrast between that which perpetually changes and that which does not change, between each ever-varying cluster of vivid states and their unvarying *nexus*. This transcendent distinction needs a name. I must use some

mark to imply this duration as distinguished from this transitoriness—this permanence in the midst of that which has no permanence. And the word existence, as applied to the unknown *nexus,* has no other meaning. It expresses nothing beyond this primordial fact in my experience."[19] It is to be questioned, however, whether "existence" does generally refer to this nexus. No doubt "existence" can be used to refer to substances and "non-existence" to refer to qualities, but certainly when we use these words in this sense we are giving them an unusual meaning. When we say that an entity does not exist, we certainly do not usually mean that this entity is merely a quality and not a substance. Furthermore, such a definition does not enable us to distinguish between such substances as phlogiston and the gods and goddesses of mythology on the one hand, and such substances as trees and men on the other. We can think of a persisting substratum called Diana that supports an ever-changing group of qualities. Now she is hunting with bow and arrow, now she is driving the silver chariot of the moon. She is conceived as a substance just as this desk is. And so a definition of this kind does not assist us in making a distinction between the two. To be sure, a similar objection can be made to any definition of existence. No definition will be able to determine the content of existence with absolute precision.[20] But this definition leaves the content undetermined just where we are looking for help. What we want is a definition that will make a distinction between different kinds of substances, one that will definitely rule out such entities as Diana and Zeus and fairies and centaurs, as they are usually conceived. We want to be told what *kinds* of substances are real; we do not want to be told simply that an entity to exist must be a substance of some sort.

One of the most important of all the senses of reality has arisen, most probably, directly out of this notion of permanence that we have just been discussing. To be real an entity must persist. But to persist means to perdure through all time. Consequently, a real entity must persist at the times when I am not thinking of it. It must, that is to say, be independent of my consciousness of it. And so reality

[19] Herbert Spencer: Principles of Psychology, 2d ed., 1877, §467. Cf. also § 59.

[20] *Infra,* ch. 5.

comes to mean independence of consciousness and independence of consciousness comes to mean reality. This meaning of reality is already peeping out of a passage in Democritus. "By the senses," he says, "we in truth know nothing sure, but only something that changes according to the disposition of the body and of the things that enter into it or resist it."[21] If we could get at something that continues on its way regardless of the percipient, we should be getting at reality. But we cannot arrive at such real entities through the senses; through them we can only arrive at entities that depend upon the body. And it is the independent ones alone that are real. This linking of reality with independence has persisted. At the present time we often find reality described in terms of independence. For there is a widespread conviction that unreal entities do not perdure through those instants at which they are not objects of thought, while real entities perdure through those instants at which they are not being thought of as well as through the instants at which they *are* objects of consciousness.

Now, when a real entity is described as one that is not dependent on my thought of it, or on any thought of it, there is one class of entities that is definitely being called unreal. These are the "ideas" that have been said to be the objects of our consciousness. When I think, I think an idea that may or may not have an entity beyond to which it means to correspond. But an idea of this kind does not persist when I am not thinking of it; or, in any case, it does not persist when no consciousness is thinking of it. It is conceived to be dependent on consciousness, whether on my individual consciousness or on consciousness in general. If, then, to exist is to be independent of consciousness, these "ideas" do not exist. It follows, consequently, that one cannot be an epistemological dualist proclaiming the existence of ideas and at the same time be using "existence" to mean independence.

This definition, however, while it determines the ontological status of "ideas" in the epistemological sense, is open to the same objection as that which we made against the identification of existence with permanence. After all, it is in order to distinguish between centaurs and fairies

[21] Democritus: fr. 9.

and horses and men that we feel called upon to use the terms "existence" and "non-existence." A definition of existence in terms of independence, however, does not help us in the least to make distinctions of this kind. Ivanhoe and Walter Scott pretend to be in the same position so far as independence of my consciousness is concerned. Diana and all the other deities of Greek mythology were taken by the orthodox to be independent. They were "immortal" and were conceived to be entities that would persist when the consciousness of mortal man is no more. Phlogiston, again, pretended to be independent of consciousness. It was conceived as an element that persists through those instants at which no one is thinking of it, as well as through those instants at which it is an object of thought. In fact, unless we have been very much affected by idealism, all entities come to us pretending to be independent. And if the thesis of idealism is ever before our minds, they all alike come seeming to be dependent on consciousness,—the island Madagascar as well as the island Atlantis. A definition in terms of independence, consequently, does not separate out the entities we are primarily interested in excluding from existence. Indeed, some of those who most loudly insist on the independence of real entities recognize that a definition in terms of independence would be unsatisfactory. Perry, for example, in order to support the view that real entities are independent of consciousness, deals at length with the notion of independence. And yet in developing a theory of independence he disclaims any intention to *define* reality in terms of independence.[22]

The meanings of "real" we have thus far been led to consider have all been due to ambiguities in the notion of permanence. There have been various meanings attached to the word "real" as there have been various senses in which permanence has been understood. But the senses of the word that we are now to consider are connected in a different fashion with the concept of permanence. The different senses to which we are now to attend are due, not to ambiguities in the term itself, but to differences of opinion as to what is concomitant with permanence. Permanence is held to be co-extensive now with one quality, now with another. And, since permanence is equivalent

[22] The New Realism, p. 117.

to reality, reality will, of course, be held to be co-extensive now with one quality and now with another. But if it is co-extensive with these qualities, it may be defined in terms of these qualities. And so the notion of permanence drops out of sight and reality is held to be equivalent, directly, to these qualities newly come upon the stage.

It is in this way, I think, that we must explain the genesis of the notion that entities known by "reason" are alone real. These entities were probably called "real" in the first instance, not because they were known by reason, but because they were permanent. And probably before "unreal" came to mean "known through sense perception," objects perceived by the senses were called unreal because they were subject to change. The entities that change continually, among which nothing abides, were identified with the entities of which we become conscious through sense perception; and those that remain unchanged were identified with those that we know through reason. And so the real came to mean the intelligible and the unreal the sensible. As we have found Democritus saying, "By the senses we in truth know nothing sure, but only something that changes according to the disposition of the body and of the things that enter into it or resist it."[23] Intelligible entities, it is implied, do not vary with the subject; they remain unaltered and persisting, and consequently they alone are real. The Platonic dialogues are the great source of inspiration for this identification of the real with the intelligible. There we find in abundance passages in which the objects of the intellect, the Ideas, are eulogized and called "real," and in which the objects of the senses are called "unreal."[24] A realism or rationalism of this kind comes to the Middle Ages with Saint Augustine. The author of the "City of God" shows the same partiality for these intelligible entities. The mind, says he, "is disabled by besotting and inveterate vices not merely from delighting and abiding in, but even from tolerating His unchangeable light, until it has been gradually healed, and renewed, and made capable of such felicity."[25] Did we, however, have a mind that was entirely

[23] Democritus: fr. 9.

[24] Cf. esp.—Phaedo: 65, 74; Republic: 525.

[25] St. Augustine—City of God; Bk. 11, Sec. 2.

purified, then we should have a mind capable of contemplating the immutable spiritual things that are supremely real and abiding. There are, in fact, two ways in which material things may be known. They "are known in one way by the angels in the Word of God, in which are seen the eternally abiding causes and reasons according to which these things were made, and in another way in which these things are seen as they are in themselves. In the former way, they are known with a clearer knowledge; in the latter they are known with a dimmer knowledge, a knowledge rather of the bare works than of the design."[26] It is knowledge of the spirit that, implicitly, is true knowledge, knowledge of the spirit that alone contemplates true reality. Scattered through the Middle Ages we find marks of this Platonic doctrine. That "in which there is any mutable element," says Saint Anselm,[27] "is not altogether what it is. . . . And what has a past existence which is no longer, or a future existence which is not yet,—this does not properly and absolutely exist." It is God who truly is, God who is pure spirit and immutable. Similarly in the seventeenth century we find the distinction made between the spiritual things that are truly real, and the sensible things that stand on a lower plane. We find the distinction made by Descartes, especially in the small "Search after Truth"; we find it made by Malebranche and the more pious Cartesians, by Spinoza and by Leibniz.

Thus, the word "real" is used to point to intelligible entities. The only real entities are those that are known by reason. Sensation and imagination are not distinguished; the entities that are known by either of these faculties are unreal. The same seventeenth century philosophers who used the word "real" in this sense frequently employed the phrase: "clear and distinct ideas." To be sure, when this phrase was upon their lips, they usually were talking about judgments. But often we may regard the object held in view to be an entity that is intuited rather than a judgment that is asserted. And when this is the case, it is the entities that are "clear and distinct" that are real and those that are obscure or confused that

[26] *Ibid:* Bk. II, Sec. 29.
[27] St. Anselm: Proslogium, ch. 22.

are unreal. This, however, is not a different use of the word "real" from that which makes "real" and "intelligible" synonymous. For the entities that are referred to as "clear and distinct" are generally precisely those that are intelligible. Mathematical concepts, God, and moral ideals are intelligible entities and they are at the same time objects that are "clear and distinct." They are not clear and distinct in the sense that we can form images of them that have sharp outlines, for these are entities of which we can form no images at all; but they are clear and distinct in the sense that they can be thought through without contradiction. "Intelligible," "clear and distinct," "self-consistent," and "real"—all mean one and the same thing. The very fact that so many terms were used to point to the same class of entities shows how important these entities were held to be. They were the real entities; all others were unreal and at the same time unimportant.

On the other hand there is a tendency to identify the real and permanent with the stable and reliable. And entities that are present to the senses are then identified with those that are stable. Other entities than these sense-data are mere fancies, cobwebs of the brain that can be swept aside. But these things that are seen and felt are not ephemeral. They cannot be wished away; they are enduring. And so the term "real" comes to *mean* these sense-data. This, at least, seems to be the easiest way in which to explain the genesis of the view that sense-data alone are real. Whether this view arises in this way or not, however, we find this sense of the term coming into use rather early. In Epicureanism "real" is used to mean sense-data quite evidently. To be real *means* to be present to the senses. It is a sense of "real", moreover, that has remained. In modern philosophy nothing is more common than the use of the term in this sense. From Bacon and Hobbes to James and Bergson there has been a line of philosophers to whom this has been the meaning of "real." And in the course of the extensive history of this sense of reality, new meanings of the term have been introduced. Just as in the first place different kinds of permanence were discovered and reality identified with each kind separately, so here there are found to be various ways in which an entity can be present to the

senses and reality is then identified with each kind of sense-data in turn. But the consideration of these developments we shall reserve for another chapter. (Chap. III.)

Development along another line leads to a rather paradoxical conclusion. We meet no success in looking for that which is permanent. We decide that all objects change, even those most nearly stable. But in the depths of our despair we light upon one thing that remains forever, namely, change itself. For if all objects are continually changing, then change itself never ceases. Of course the reference cannot be to any specific case of becoming. It would be absurd to hold that a given example of change is an example of permanence, that of the entity under consideration the part that changes remains. It is not the changing entity that is permanent, but the fact of change. What remains unaltered is the *law* that all entities change. We find our permanence, consequently, not in phenomena themselves, but in the laws to which phenomena are subject. And so we come to identify permanence and reality with law and with subjection to law. In Hermann Lotze the meaning of the term "real" undergoes quite explicitly a development of this sort. In summarizing one of his discussions, he says: "We gave up seeking the permanent element of things in a state of facts always identical with itself, and credited ourselves with finding it in the very heart of change, as the uniform import of a law which connects a multiplicity of states into one rounded whole."[28] In this way "real" comes to mean the law to which changing phenomena are subject, the system to which changing phenomena belong. It comes to mean the system of interrelated entities and the interrelated entities that belong to this system. But if the meaning of "real" is to be precise and definite, we must elaborate this idea and make further distinctions. However, this too will be left for another chapter. (Chap. IV.)

There can in this general way be found a common origin for most of the meanings the term "real" has been given. But from this common origin there develops the greatest diversity. Senses of "reality" come into use that are utterly opposed to one another. All of the entities that are "real" if the term is used in one sense are "unreal" when the term

[28] Lotze: Metaphysic, Bk. 1, ch. 4, § 38. Trans. by Bosanquet, 1884, p. 78.

is used with another meaning. We come to the pass where we cannot in the least tell whether an entity is real or not unless we know in which of these many senses "real" is being used. Now of these many conflicting senses, which is to be chosen? The sense in which reality is identified with permanence has a certain claim due to its priority. But we have found permanence to be an ambiguous concept; and we have found that a definition of reality in terms of permanence does not assist us in making the distinctions we are interested in making. Furthermore, mere priority certainly establishes no convincing claim. We cannot say, because "real" was said to mean the permanent before it was said to mean that which is present to the senses, that "real" is not to be given this latter meaning. All senses of the term, both original and derivative, stand on a par as possible senses in which the term may be used. And when we choose to use the term in one of these senses rather than in another, it is by an arbitrary choice that we decide that the term is to have for us this one meaning rather than some other.

It is rare, however, to find a writer who realizes that there is something arbitrary in giving the term "real" the meaning he chooses to give it. For the most part, a writer will use the term in one of its senses without noticing the fact that it has often been used in very different senses. "Real," as we have seen, has often been used to mean that which is "intelligible," that which is given to the intellect alone. And this use of "real" has often been accompanied by the employment of many pious and edifying expressions. A noble life is identified with one conversant about the intelligible entities, an ignoble life with one whose attention is limited to sensible entities. Statements of this kind are so frequently associated with, and apparently based upon, statements that intelligible entities alone are real, that one would think these edifying sentiments could flow out of such a meaning of the term "real." And yet the identification of the "real" with the "intelligible" is merely a matter of definition. These intelligible entities, that by definition are given the predicate "real" also, may of course be held to be important and praiseworthy on other grounds. But to the extent to which they have been held important because they have the predicate "real," we have a right to enter an

objection. For, as we have seen, it is only by an arbitrary definition that the intelligible entities are called "real." While those whom I may call Platonists are applying the term to these entities and are withholding it from the objects of the senses, others whom we shall consider in the next chapter are applying it to the sensible entities, and are not applying it—some of them, at least, are not—to any of the intelligible entities. Since now one has no more right to the term than the other, an author is free to elect that the term shall carry for him one meaning or that it shall carry for him the other meaning. One exercises choice in giving the word one meaning or another; and in this sense there is something arbitrary about the way in which "real," as the result of such a choice, is implicitly or explicitly defined.

There are certain methods of approach that are especially likely to make one lose sight of this element of choice. This is particularly the case when an author fixes his attention on the concept that "real" symbolizes for him and disregards the word itself that does the symbolizing. These concepts or notions or ideas, we may admit to be fixed and objective —in the *nature* of things. Reality in the sense of intelligibility may be as objective as you please, and so may reality in the sense in which it is synonymous with sensibility. But it is arbitrary to make the *term* "reality" refer to one of these objective concepts rather than to the other. Accordingly, the meaning of the *term* is not objectively given. The term has been used to refer to any number of different concepts. And so when we make use of it, it will not be clear which of these many concepts is meant unless we *make* it clear. It behooves us, therefore, in employing the term "real," to state the meaning the term has for us. We must lay down a definition of reality, a statement of what it means to us to be real. It will not be sufficient to say of "reality" or "existence" as Descartes[29] does, and as Kant[30] and others do after him, that it is simple and clear. Nor will it be sufficient to let the matter go with a vague statement such as Wolff's: "Existence is the completing of possibility,"[31] a statement

[29] Descartes: Reply to the Sixth Set of Objections. *Oeuvres*, ed. by Adam and Tannery, vol. 9, p. 225; Principles of Philosophy, Part 1, Prin. 10.

[30] Kant: *Der einzig mögliche Beweisgrund zu einer Demonstration des Daseins Gottes. Werke*, ed. by Hartenstein, vol. 2, p. 115.

[31] Wolff: *Ontologia*, § 174.

that does not tell us at all which of the many possible senses of the word is being used. We need a definition, either an explicit definition or one implicit in the context, that will show us which sense of the word is intended. Without such a definition we cannot judge of the truth of those propositions of the author's in which the term "real" appears. With such a definition, on the other hand, not only do such propositions become meaningful, but we have a criterion that enables us to tell which entities are "real" in the sense of the word that is chosen and which are unreal.

CHAPTER III.

The Real as the Sensible.

"Real" and "existing" are terms that we are using all the time to mark off that which is substantial and in a certain sense important from that which is a mere phantasm, that which is a mere subsistent or mere idea. We use these terms with perfect freedom, as if there were a perfectly clear and well recognized distinction between the real and the unreal. But, as a matter of fact, there is, as we have seen, by no means such unanimity of opinion as to what objects shall be called "real" and what "unreal." One philosopher assumes that one set of objects are primarily deserving of the predicate "real," another that the term "real" points to quite another set of objects. In the present chapter we shall deal with the opinion that assumes that the term "real" denotes primarily the objects present to the senses. This is but one out of many meanings the term in question has been given; some have used "real" to mean ideas that are clear and distinct, others to mean that which is in time and space, others to mean that which has power or force, others to mean that which we have on divine authority.

But the view of "reality" that we shall deal with in this chapter applies the term to those entities which it is perhaps most frequently used to denote. And since it is in this sense that the term is used most commonly, when we use it so, we are more than usually likely to forget that in other contexts the term has other meanings. "Real" is said primarily to denote sense-data without any reason being stated by the author why this rather than some other meaning is given the word, without the author giving any evidence to show that he is even conscious the word is sometimes used in a different sense. And quite frequently "real" is used to mean sense-data without any explicit statement in which the term is definitely given this meaning.

We shall deal in this chapter with those who apply the term "real" primarily to sense-data. Things that we hear and taste and feel and see are real, it is assumed. A table,

if it is something we see before us, something present to the senses, is real. The reality of God, or of an historical event alleged to have taken place centuries ago, is open to dispute. But this table before me I see; it is a sense-datum, and that is sufficient to establish its reality on incontestable grounds. Such a doctrine as to the meaning of "real" is usually accompanied by another opinion from which it cannot be easily distinguished. I refer to the opinion that we are first aware of sense-data and that investigation should start out with these simple data and gradually lead up to conceptional generalizations. One is an opinion on the nature of the real, the other an opinion on the order in which the various kinds of objects of thought do and should come before the mind; one answers a question in ontology, the other a question in psychology and what may be called methodology. And yet since one opinion often leads one unwittingly to accept the other, and since the opinions with which we are dealing are not always explicitly stated, but must be extricated from statements in which some indefinite sort of priority is attributed to sense-data, it is difficult to distinguish between these two ideas.

In the Epicurean philosophy, as we find it summarized by Diogenes Laërtius, these two principles are both endorsed. We read: "Again, the reason cannot pronounce on the senses; for we have already seen that all reasoning has the senses for its foundation."[82] Here we have stated the psychological priority of perceptual objects, and the ontological priority of these objects based upon that fact. In the next sentence the "real" is identified with sense-data in as explicit a manner as we can expect to find. "Reality and the evidence of sensation establish the certainty of the senses; for the impressions of the sight and hearing are just as real, just as evident, as pain." The reality of sense-data, that is to say, is assumed. Sense-data are real because they just are. This may seem puerile, but it is not; there can be no better reason given. For "real" is one term and "sense-data" another. And to use them together in this manner can only mean that they are being used to point to the same objects. The term "real" is being used in the sense in which it means sense-data. "Real" is being *de-*

[82] Diogenes Laërtius: Lives of the Philosophers. Translation by Yonge, p. 435.

fined to mean sense-data; that is the only and sufficient reason why sense-data are real.

For how can the psychological priority of perceptual objects show their reality? Assuming that I am first aware of percepts and later of concepts, why should I apply the term "real" to these entities that first become objects of my consciousness? Others who do not deny the psychological priority of percepts call the concepts "real." It can only be that I am using the term "real" in a different sense from that in which they are using it. I am using it to denote those objects that are psychologically prior, or, more concretely, sense-data. Or, rather, Epicurus is using it so, since, if we can rely on Diogenes Laërtius, he asserts both the psychological and the ontological priority of sense-data.

But as we come to close quarters with this notion of sense-data we notice two sets of entities to which it may apply. We may be naming "sense-data" those objects that excite the sense organs and cause the observer to be conscious of sights or sounds. Or we may be referring to the peculiarly vivid objects of consciousness that we assume to be due to such excitation of the sense organs. I am not concerned in differentiating the cause of consciousness from the object of consciousness in the case of veridical perception. For my present purpose it is a matter of indifference whether, when we perceive correctly, the object of consciousness and the cause of consciousness be taken as one or as two. But since there are times when we err in our perceptions, since our senses deceive us, which group of entities do we mean by "sense-data"? Do we mean all entities that excite the sense organs and result in consciousness, whether the resulting experience be valid or illusory? Or do we mean vivid objects of consciousness presumably due to stimulation of the sense-organs, whether or not they correspond to—or, if you will have it so, are identical with—the *causes* of this consciousness? In the system of Epicurus this distinction between the causes of consciousness and the objects of consciousness is not made. And the distinction does not have to be made, since Epicurus does not admit the possibility of error in sense-perception. That is, there is for him no vivid object of consciousness that is not identical in content with

the cause of that consciousness. There is nothing that we see that has not acted upon us. "The visions of insanity and of sleep have a real object," writes Laërtius,[38] "for they act upon us; and that which has no reality can produce no action." Since, then, the causes of consciousness are identical in content with the objects of consciousness, it makes no difference under which name we assert the reality of this group of entities. But to us who do recognize the possibility of error in sense-perceptions, and for whom, in consequence, the distinction between the causes of consciousness and the objects of consciousness does have meaning, it is the latter group, the objects of consciousness, that Epicurus seems to have called "real." The vivid sun that seems to be two hundred feet away Epicurus said was a real sun; to the visions of insanity and of sleep he attributed, too, a real object. What we should call the objects of perception but not the causes of perception he called "real." But for Epicurus these objects of perception were identical in content with the causes of perception. Epicurus meant by "real" what he meant by "cause of perception" or by "object of perception," but he meant by "real" what we mean by "object of perception" and not what we mean by "cause of perception." But in making these distinctions between Epicurus's point of view and our own and between causes of perception and objects of perception, let us not forget the larger statement on which these distinctions are refinements. In any case, when Epicurus used the term "real" he referred to what we may indefinitely call "sense-data." "Real" is used in the sense which is of present interest to us; it is used in the sense in which it points primarily to the entities present to the senses and not to concepts of reason or to the mystical "One" that is All, or what not.

In modern times the empiricism that has now become so widespread found its first important exponent in Francis Bacon. Bacon was more interested in the methodological principle that investigations should start with sense-perceptions and gradually advance to broad generalizations than he was in applying the term "real" to sense-data. He was convinced that all opinions have their basis in sense-perceptions. "Man," says the first aphorism of the Novum

[38] *Ibid*, p. 435.

Organum, "as the minister and interpreter of nature, does and understands as much as his observations on the order of nature, either with regard to things or the mind, permit him, and neither knows nor is capable of more." All of us, then, get our opinions from our sense-data. Some, however, build big and inspiring, though hasty and unstable, structures on this foundation, while others advance cautiously and leave reluctantly the secure ground from which they start. "There are and can exist but two ways of investigating and discovering truth," says Bacon, and both start with sense-perceptions. Even he who is most enamored of the flights of reason must start with the senses. But "the one hurries on rapidly from the senses and particulars to the most general axioms, and from them as principles and their supposed indisputable truth derives and discovers the intermediate axioms," while "the other constructs its axioms from the senses and particulars, by ascending continually and gradually, till it finally arrives at the most general axioms." The former, Bacon says, is the method his contemporaries use, while the latter is "the true but unattempted way."[84]

Bacon is the high priest of sense. His new method is a method in which sense-perceptions have the most important part. And when he comes to use the word "real," he uses it, too, to mean that which is present to the senses. The sense-data, according to him, are "real"; the products of the mind with which they become entangled are false. But in contrast to the position of Epicurus, it is the causes of perception and not the objects of perception that Bacon makes real. The entities that present themselves to the sense-organs and result in consciousness, these are the real entities. Unfortunately there is often a certain manipulation, a distortion, and a contamination in the process of getting known, so that what we are finally conscious of is not identical in content with the entity first presenting itself to the sense-organ. It is the crude sense-datum, not yet worked over by the mind, that he calls "real"; and a process of "getting known" that shall not affect the content, that he holds desirable. The cause of perception is real; we can be conscious of this "real" by neutralizing the

[84] Bacon: *Novum Organum,* Aphorism 19.

damage done by the mind in altering the content of the material presented to the sense-organs. "For," says Bacon,[35] "let men please themselves as they will in admiring and almost adoring the human mind, this is certain: that as an uneven mirror distorts the rays of objects according to its own figure and section, so the mind, when it receives impressions of objects through the sense, cannot be trusted to report them truly, but in forming its notions mixes up its own nature with the nature of things."

And not only is Reason the criminal, Sense also is at fault. Besides the distortions of reason or mind, we must guard against the deceptions of the senses themselves. Bacon is not one of those who say the senses are always correct, who say that what we call deceptions of the senses are mistakes of judgment in interpreting the data of the senses. According to him the objects of sense-perception often fail to tally with the causes of perception. And when there is this failure, it is the causes of perception and not the objects of perception that are real; the latter are illusory and unreal. And so even the objects of sense with which we start must be submitted to a process of scrutiny and correction. The cause of perception, to which the term "real" is restricted, is the objective of knowledge. In order to be aware of the content of this cause of perception, we must correct the errors to be found in the objects of sense-perception and neutralize as far as possible the distortions introduced by mind. Or, as Bacon summarizes his position, "the evidence of the sense, helped and guarded by a certain process of correction, I retain. But the mental operation which follows the act of sense I for the most part reject."[36]

The position of John Locke is much less simple than that of Bacon. The "Essay on the Human Understanding" is somewhat encyclopedic in character; the many subjects that are discussed in it are not treated with the singleness of purpose we find in Bacon's philosophical writings. Consequently we do not find in Locke this whole-hearted advocacy of the priority of sense-data. We find passages

[35] Plan of the Instauration; in the edition by J. M. Robertson (1905), p. 250.

[36] *Ibid.* Ed. by J. M. Robertson, p. 256.

evidencing an empiricism that is quite marked, but we should be slow to accept these passages as typical. Yet traditionally Locke is considered an empiricist, and this characterization is not without some justification. On the psychological side, his advocacy of the priority of sense-data can be asserted without qualification. Again and again he tells us that all ideas come from experience.[37] The mind, Locke says, cannot originate a single new simple idea.[38] These simple ideas, since they cannot be derived from the mind itself, must all be the result of entities directly present to the senses. Consequently the psychological priority of sense-data is well established. Simple ideas are identified with sense-data, and complex ideas are derived from, and consequently subsequent to, these simple ideas.

In many passages, too, Locke asserts the ontological priority of sense-data. The objects of sense-perception are associated with a reality of a sort that other objects have not. An entity I see or have seen I know to be real, but the reality of an entity that is not in connection with my senses is quite unreliable. "For if I saw," says Locke, "such a collection of simple ideas as is wont to be called 'man' existing together one minute since, and am now alone, I cannot be certain that the same man exists now."[39] That is to say, we can assert the reality of the man one minute ago on the ground that he was a sense-datum, but we have no such basis for attributing reality to the man of the present moment. Those entities that are sense-data are real in contrast to the entities that are not; and those entities that have been sense-data are also given the name "real." "Real" is used in a sense in which it points out entities that are or have been present to the senses.

In other places the reality of sense-data is contrasted with the possible unreality of facts we learn from authority. I may learn on authority that gold is malleable, but the malleability of gold will still be a fact of doubtful reality. When I have before me gold that is hammered out, then, being a sense-datum, malleability is a fact.[40] We know

[37] Essay on the Human Understanding, especially Book 2, chapter 1.

[38] Book 2, chapter 2, section 2, and Book 4, chapter 4, section 4.

[39] *Ibid;* Book 4, chapter 11, section 9.

[40] *Ibid;* Book 4, chapter 12, section 9. Cf. also Book 1, chapter 4, section 23.

what we experience, but do not necessarily know what we have on authority. It is true that we are here dealing with the certainty of our knowledge and are not here dealing directly with the ontological status of the objects of that knowledge. We are dealing in the first instance with the category of modality and not with the category of reality. There is, however, an intimate connection between the two. An object that I do not *know* to be real belongs to a class containing both real and unreal entities. If objects that we have on authority were all real, I should know an entity to be real as soon as it is described as such an object. And since, according to Locke, we do not know entities to be real that are given on authority, some entities that we have on authority may be real and some may be unreal. "Object learned on authority" does not imply "real object" as "object present to the senses" does.

The meaning of reality that I have been bringing out is that in which the word is applied to sense-data exclusively and is not applied exclusively to facts learned on authority, nor, indeed, to any entities that are not sense-data. It is a sense in which the distinction between real and unreal holds of the mere content, regardless of whether the entity under consideration be "thing" or "idea." But at other times it is the "thing" that Locke calls real in contrast to the "idea," the "thing" with its primary qualities and not the various ideas in our minds representing the "thing." It is not that Locke often explicitly identifies the real with the "thing" and the unreal with the "idea." But there is, through much of his book, a bias in favor of the "thing" as substantial, reliable and real. Now, in so far as Locke calls the "thing" real, he is again using the "real" to signify a sense-datum. For the "thing" is the cause of perception, and the sense-datum, it will be remembered, can be taken to mean either the cause of perception or the object of perception. In this connection, where "real" means the "thing" and not the "idea," it obviously means the sense-datum as cause of perception and not as object of perception. But in the cases with which we had previously to deal, the cases in which "real" means the sense-datum and not the fact that we learn on authority or by conjecture, it is hard to tell whether the sense-datum that is real is the

cause of perception or the object of perception. Probably there, too, it is the cause of perception that is real. The hammered gold that is a sense-datum probably is "real" in that it affects my sense-organs and not in that it is a vivid object of consciousness. But there are passages in which Locke seems to imply that when it is the content that we are dividing into real and unreal, the distinction between the content of the cause of perception and that of the object of perception is unnecessary. He seems to feel that the vivid objects of perception never point to the wrong causes of perception, that objects of sense-perception have internal marks distinguishing them from dream objects and illusions.[41] And if we conclude from these passages that Locke does not, in these passages, recognize the possibility of error in sense-impressions, we must admit that it is no more necessary for him than it was for Epicurus to distinguish between the content of the cause of perception and that of the object of perception.

The Locke whom we have been considering has applied the term "real" to sense-data exclusively. Now he has applied it to the thing outside the mind in contrast to the ideas we have of this thing, now to the object of experience in contrast to the fact learned on authority or by conjecture. In the one case he means the cause of perception; in the other it is doubtful whether he means the cause of perception or whether he fails to find it necessary in practice to distinguish between the content of the cause of perception and that of the object of perception. But in any case the "real" has meant a sense-datum. We were prepared in the beginning, however, to find that Locke was not so thoroughgoing a sensationalist as Bacon. There are many passages in which he asserts the reality of entities other than sense-data, where he gives the term "real" other meanings. For example, substance, he says, is "real." Why? It is real because it is impossible for us to conceive of attributes without a substratum, not because substance is a sense-datum.[42] "Real" here is used in a sense in which it means that the opposite of which is inconceivable, not in the sense in which it means that which is a sense-datum. Again,

[41] *Ibid;* Book 4, chapter 2, section 14, and Book 4, chapter 11.
[42] *Ibid;* Book 2, chapter 23, section 4.

Locke at times uses "real" in the sense of "possible." Objects of thought that are possible he calls "real," though he does not say they "exist." It is a sense of "real," that is to say, in which the term ceases to be synonymous with "existence." It is in this sense that mathematical entities and moral concepts such as "absolute justice" are "real."[43] They are not sense-data, they in some cases do not "exist," and yet they are called "real." All objects of thought that are possible, the component parts of which are compossible, are real. We have knowledge of reality when we perceive the agreement between our ideas, for the agreeing ideas constitute a "real." And so in many places "reality," if not "existence," is used in a sense in which it by no means points to sense-data. "Real" is used by Locke in more than one sense. In some passages the term "real" points to a sense-datum of one sort or another. In other passages it means something other than that which is a sense-datum. And so if we call sensationalism the assertion that to be real means to be a sense-datum of some sort, Locke may be called a sensationalist in his definition of "real," but certainly not a consistent one. His "real" in many contexts refers to the sense-datum and to nothing else. But in other passages his use of "real" is very similar to that traditionally attributed to Leibniz. And it is a sensationalism that at its best is expressed haltingly and without enthusiasm.

Bishop Berkeley, insofar as he asserts the reality of sense-data, asserts it in a more clear-cut and a simpler manner than does Locke. With him as with Locke all of our ideas arise from experience. Some objects are present to our external senses, some objects are present to our internal sense, and the rest of our ideas are complexes founded upon these two forms of sense experience. "The objects of knowledge," he writes, "are (1) ideas actually imprinted on the senses, (2) ideas perceived by attending to the passions and operations of the mind, or, lastly, (3) ideas formed by help of memory and imagination—either compounding, dividing, or barely representing those originally perceived in the aforesaid ways."[44] Psychologically, then,

[43] *Ibid;* Book 4, chapter 4, sections 6–8.

[44] Principles of Human Knowledge, part 1, section 1.

the data of the external and internal senses are prior—with Berkeley as with Locke—to the objects formed by help of memory and imagination. But when it comes to restricting the term "real" to these entities psychologically prior, Berkeley is more definite than Locke. The objects of the senses as contrasted with those of the imagination are "real." And we do not have to wonder whether it is the cause of perception or the object of perception that he makes "real." Sense-data are real as *objects* of perception. They are real in that they are vivid, brilliant, compelling objects, and the objects of the imagination are unreal in that they are weak, faint, and subject to change at will. "The ideas imprinted on the senses by the Author of nature are called *real things,* and those excited in the imagination being less vivid and constant are more properly termed *ideas* or *images of things,* which they copy and represent."[45] And again we read: "The ideas of sense are allowed to have more reality in them than the creatures of the mind."

It is accordingly the vivid objects of perception that Berkeley uses the term "real" to point out. He cannot admit, if he adheres to this meaning of reality, the possibility of error in sense-perceptions. For to do so would be to run counter to his identification of reality with vivid objects of perception by making some of these vivid objects of perception unreal. And Berkeley does seem to call all these vivid objects "real," though there are some to which the term as commonly used would not apply, some which, in the denotation given the term more usually, would be called unreal. "For my part," says Berkeley,[46] "I can as well doubt of my own being as of the being of those *things which I actually perceive by sense;* it being a manifest contradiction that any sensible object should be immediately perceived by sight or touch, and at the same time have no existence in nature, since the very *existence* of an unthinking being consists in *being perceived.*"

In all this the term "real" most clearly and explicitly refers to sense-data. But in other connections the term quite as evidently does not refer to sense-data. I have in mind those passages where Descartes's phrase "clear and

[45] *Ibid:* section 33. Cf. also sections 36, 90.
[46] *Ibid:* section 88.

distinct ideas" shows itself. In the introduction to the "Principles of Human Knowledge," for example, general abstract ideas are declared unreal. Ideas such as "triangle" are declared unreal, not on the ground that they are creatures of the imagination, lacking the vividness of experience, but on the ground that they are objects of thought that are not clear and distinct. The two criteria must be distinguished. For many objects with the compelling power and vividness of experience are hazy and inchoate in form and possibly inconsistent on analysis, while others that are quite definite and self-consistent may be but creatures of the imagination. General abstract ideas, then, are unreal because they are not clear and distinct. Such a statement points to a use of real that, following Descartes, makes objects real that are clear and distinct, and objects unreal that lack these qualifications. Descartes had an influence on the line of British philosophers that is not always recognized. Locke, Berkeley and Hume by no means developed a system of thought indigenous to the British Isles, insulated from their contemporaries and predecessors on the Continent. But the evidence of this Continental influence, especially on the part of Descartes, is so very abundant that the point is hardly worth mentioning.

In the latter part of his life Berkeley may be assumed to have again used "real" in a sense in which it does not point to sense-data. In "Siris" he shows himself particularly interested, not in the entities that are psychologically prior, but in the entities that are inferred from these sense-data. It is the knowledge of spirits and of the Platonic Ideas that he stresses, entities which I presume he would call real, though they are evidently not sense-data. In so far, then, as he calls spirits and the Platonic Ideas "real," he is using "real" in a sense in which it means, not sense-data, but entities that we are aware of mediately and inferentially.

Hume's use of "real" is very similar to that characteristic of Berkeley. He begins, as do Locke and Berkeley, with the assertion that, psychologically, sense-data are the first objects of our consciousness, and that it is from them that our other objects are derived. The vivid sense-data are called impressions, the derivative objects ideas. There is some shifting, however, from the psychological thesis that *all* ideas must be derived from sense-data, to the thesis that

all *valid* objects of thought—though not all *possible* objects of thought— must be derived from sense-data. It becomes, not *impossible,* but *invalid,* to have objects of thought that are not derived from sense-data. And so we get the ontological principle that sense-impressions and ideas derived from sense-impressions are "real," while other objects of consciousness are unreal. There are only impressions and ideas derived from them, according to Hume; the rest is arguing about words. But, contrary to his psychological thesis, he admits a "rest"; it is possible to have as an object of consciousness what he would call a "mere word." For example, some people talk about "power." But "power" is an object of consciousness that is a "mere word"; it is a pseudo-idea, unreal in that there is no impression from which it is derived.

At times Hume restricts the meaning of reality further. He uses the term to mean, not both sense-impressions and the ideas derived from them, but only the vivid sense-impressions. Sense-data are real. The objects I am aware of when I look at entities are real; but when I turn away and am aware of these entities as "still there," the objects of my consciousness are unreal. The fiction of the continued existence of these entities, Hume says, "is really false," for—I suppose this is his meaning—when I am not looking at these entities they are not sense-data, and are, consequently, unreal.[47]

At other times Hume, like Berkeley, uses "real" to mean the "clear and distinct." Universals are unreal, not so much because they are not sense-data or derived from sense-data, but rather because they are not clear and distinct.[48] And power is unreal, not only in that it is not derived from a sense-datum, but also because we have no distinct idea of either some particular power or of power in general.[49] Then we can find passages in Hume, and in Locke and Berkeley as well, where all objects of consciousness seem to be real. In the main, however, Hume uses "real" to mean sense-data, and, with some wavering, objects derived from sense-data. Sense-data are real as "vivid objects" and not in the sense of "causes of percep-

[47] Hume: Treatise of Human Nature, Book 1, pt. 4, sec. 2; Cf. also Book 1, pt. 3, sec. 5.

[48] *Ibid:* Book 1, pt. 1, sec. 7.

[49] *Ibid:* Book 1, pt. 3, sec. 14.

tion," though to a certain extent Hume seems to regard the class of vivid objects as identical in content with what we are accustomed to call the causes of perception. That is to say, the result of his identification of "real" with vivid objects of perception is not to make the objects of dreams real. For he allows our ideas "in sleep, in a fever, in madness, or in any very violent emotions of soul" only to "approach" the vividness of impressions.[50] All vivid objects of consciousness are real then, though these vivid objects never happen to be what common sense would call illusions. In the other case in which Hume uses "real" to point primarily to sense-data, in the case in which the denotation of "real" is so widened that those ideas that are derived from sense-impressions are also called real, Hume is using "real" very loosely. For with merely this description of "real," it is quite impossible to determine which objects of thought are the ones that are "derived" from sense-data, and which are the objects that are not so derived, that are, consequently, "unreal." Be that as it may, what little definiteness this definition of "reality" has forces it to be recognized as belonging to the group of definitions in which the "real" is primarily identified with sense-data. And so we come to Kant.

We have previously met quite frequently with the assertion that all our ideas begin with sense-experience. In Kant we find this assertion repeated. "That all our knowledge begins with experience," we read, "there can be no doubt." "For," Kant continues, "how should the faculty of knowledge be called into activity, if not by objects which affect our senses, and which either produce representations by themselves, or rouse the activity of our understanding to compare, to connect, or to separate them."[51] And if more passages to the same effect are desired, we can turn to the beginning of the "Aesthetic" where we read: "Whatever the process and the means may be by which knowledge reaches its objects, there is one that reaches them directly and forms the ultimate material of all thought, viz.: intuition (*Anschauung*). . . . All thought, therefore, must, directly or indirectly, go back to intuitions (*Anschauungen*), *i. e.*, to our sensibility, because in no other way can

[50] *Ibid;* Book I, part I, sec. I.

[51] Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, 2d edition, p. I.

objects be given to us."[52] The effect of this, to be sure, is to give sense-data a certain fundamental position in the genesis of the objects of our consciousness, but it in no way involves the term "real." It is important for our purposes, however, because, with Kant as with the writers we have just examined, the assertion of this psychological priority of sense-data leads to the assertion of the ontological priority of these entities. Now, in considering Kant's position, we shall have to distinguish between the crude material of knowledge and the entities that result from the addition to this crude material of the mental factors that play so large a part in knowledge, between the unsynthetized manifold present to the senses and the synthetized, co-ordinated manifold that is the world as we see it. Kant implicitly denotes by "real" now one of these sets of entities, now the other. When he seems to imply that the crude, unsynthetized manifold is "real," it is the mental factors that, in contrast to this unsynthetized manifold, seem to be called "ideal." The distinction between these two elements, the crude bare data of sensation and the mental factors that make knowledge possible, Kant makes quite plainly. Connection, he says,[53] "does never lie in the objects, and cannot be borrowed from them by perception and thus be taken into the understanding, but it is always an act of the understanding, which itself is nothing but a faculty of connecting *a priori*, and of bringing the manifold of given representations under the unity of apperception." And looked at from one point of view, this connection, not lying *in* the objects, does not form a real part of the world of objects; it is a man-made addition superimposed upon nature. Though the connection is an important and valuable addition, it is the unsynthetized manifold that is the "real." There are passages, I say, in which Kant seems to take this position, in which he applies the term "real" exclusively to the crude objects not yet taken up and worked over by the understanding. For example, in the "Anticipations of Perception" in the Second Edition of the *Kritik der reinen Vernunft,* he says that phenomena contain "over and above the intuition, the material for some one object in general (through which something existing

[52] *Ibid:* 1st edition, p. 19.

[53] *Ibid:* 2d edition, Deduction of the Categories, § 16.

in space and time is represented); that is, they contain the real of sensation, as a merely subjective representation, which gives us only the consciousness that the subject is affected, and which is referred to some object in general. Now, there is a gradual transition possible from empirical to pure consciousness, till the real of it vanishes completely and there remains a merely formal consciousness (*a priori*) of the manifold in space and time." The crude data, while not the entities that Kant desires to emphasize, are called "real." And things-in-themselves, which, in so far as they have any content at all, may be taken to have the content of these crude data, are also given the attribute "existence." "For that it existed by itself," Kant says,[54] "without any reference to ourselves and possible experience, might no doubt be said when we speak of the thing by itself."

Now these crude data, in so far as they are called "real," are they real as causes of sensation or as objects of sensation? That is to say, are these crude entities real because they affect the sense-organs and bring about the perception of objects as we know them? Or are they real as elementary, embryonic objects of consciousness, as the inchoate part of the entities that are objects *for us?* There is little basis for attributing to Kant one of these positions rather than the other. He does seem, however, to make no distinction between the content of the crude cause of perception and the content of the crude object—or, rather, potential object—of perception. That is to say, he seems to deny the possibility of error where we are dealing with these very elementary objects. All error is due to the mental factors in knowledge. The crude object of perception is never unreal, never differs in content from the crude thing-in-itself that affects the sense-organs. But the evidence for this interpretation is very scanty.[55] It is scanty because Kant for the most part denies any cognizable content to either the crude cause of perception or this very elementary object of perception. For the most part he admits content only to the object of *experience,* the entity that results from the assimilation of the crude material to the mental factors that make experience possible. These

[54] *Ibid:* First Edition, p. 493.
[55] *Ibid:* First Edition, p. 303.

entities and not the crude data have content, and, in a different sense of the word "real" from that which we have been considering, these entities and not the crude data are "real."

In fact, the sense in which "real" means crude data is the exception; it is much more frequently that Kant employs the term to denote the object of experience. For the crude data are really nothing when taken by themselves; the mental factors are the *sine quibus non* of knowledge and even of perception. It is the combination of crude data and mental factors that makes the world we know, the world that Kant calls "real"—in this second sense of the word. It is not the unsynthetized manifold by itself that is "real" in this sense, but the unsynthetized manifold affected by a process of connection and so turned into objects of experience. These objects of experience are the entities that "real" most frequently denotes for Kant. These entities are the important entities; they are the only objects that are objects-for-us.

Now when "real" denotes crude data, it is evidently denoting a species of sense-data. When it denotes objects-for-us, objects of experience, it is not being used so apparently to denote sense-data. For these objects of experience are objects that are permeated through and through with ideal elements, while we generally think of sense-data as simple entities that are to be contrasted with the products of mind. But what are Kant's objects of experience? For the most part, it seems to me, Kant's "objects of experience" refer to the objects that we see and hear, the objects at hand, objects that we have been calling sense-data quite as much as we have been calling the crude material sense-data. That is to say, we must make a distinction between two sorts of sense-data. On the one hand there is the crude material, the elementary object of sense-perception; on the other hand there are the objects of sense-perception as we know them, the objects-for-us that we see and feel and hear. Yet both groups of entities may be called sense-data. The crude material has been held, by those whose opinions we have considered, to be present to the senses either as original cause or as elementary object of perception. And the objects of sense-perception, in the

form they have for us, are sense-data, in contrast to the objects of memory, of reason, and of imagination. Let us turn our attention, then, to these objects of sense-perception, which, with all the connection that is given them by mind, are still sense-data in contrast to the objects of memory, imagination, and reason.

It is to these synthetized objects of sense-perception, I have suggested, that Kant in large part attributes reality. Objects of experience rather than crude data are real, and sense-data are the objects of experience *par excellence.* Still it is not the synthetized objects of sense-perception alone that are real, in the sense of "real" with which we are concerned. These sense-data transmit their reality, so to speak, to the entities that are derived from them and connected with them. And so we have a use of "real" identical with that which we noticed in discussing Hume:—"Only sense-data and their derivatives are real." As a matter of fact, while such a principle is upheld by Hume, it is much more characteristic of Kant. "What is real in external phenomena," we find asserted in the "Critique," "is real in perception only, and cannot be given in any other way." "From such perceptions, whether by mere play of fancy or by experience, knowledge of objects can be produced, and here no doubt deceptive representations may arise, without truly corresponding objects, the deception being due, either to illusions of imagination (in dreams), or to a fault of judgment (the so-called deceptions of the senses). In order to escape from these false appearances, one has to follow the rule that *whatever is connected according to empirical laws with a perception is real.*"[56] And again, in another passage, he writes:[57] "That there may be inhabitants in the moon, though no man has ever seen them, must be admitted but it means no more than that, in the possible progress of our experience, we may meet with them; for everything is real that hangs together with a perception, according to the laws of empirical progress." Passage after passage comes to the same thing. "The postulate concerning our knowledge of the *reality* of things requires *perception,* therefore sensation and the conscious-

[56] *Ibid;* 1st Edition, p. 376.
[57] *Ibid;* 1st Edition, p. 493.

ness of it, not, indeed, immediately of the object itself, the existence of which is to be known, but yet of a connection between it and some real perception according to the analogies of experience which determine in general all real combinations in experience. . . . But if we do not begin with experience or do not *proceed according to the laws of the empirical connection of phenomena,* we are only making a vain display as if we could guess and discover the existence of anything."[58]

Sense-data and the objects that are connected with them are the objects of possible experience, and them alone is the word "real"—in the sense of the word we have been discussing—used to denote. In contrast to these objects of possible experience that are real, there are other entities that are unreal. "It is possible experience alone that can impart reality to our concepts; without this a concept is only an idea without truth, and without any reference to an object."[59] That is to say, leaving out of account the crude, inchoate data, there are two sorts of entities—the objects of possible experience and the mere ideas. An unreal entity is a "mere idea, the objective reality of which can never be shown in any possible experience," while the real world is the world of sense which "must be looked upon as the sum total of all possible experience."[60] There are unreals, then, though the content of these "mere ideas" is, as with Hume, left quite indefinite.

Now, when it is the entities in the world of possible experience that are real, these sense-data and their derivatives seem to be real in so far as they are vivid objects or connected with vivid objects, not in so far as they are causes of our thought. For, says Kant,[61] "with reference to the reality of external objects, I need as little trust to inference as with reference to the reality of the objects of my internal sense (my thoughts), both being nothing but representations, the immediate perception (consciousness) of which is at the same time a sufficient proof of their reality." This seems to imply that the objects of experience that are vivid and those objects that are connected with such vivid objects

[58] *Ibid;* 1st Edition, p. 225.
[59] *Ibid;* 1st Edition, p. 489.
[60] *Ibid;* 1st Edition. p. 437.
[61] *Ibid;* 1st Edition, p. 371.

of experience are unmistakably real. Consequently, with Kant, as with all who make sense-data real as object of perception and not as cause of perception, there is ruled out the possibility of error in the perception of vivid objects of experience. Perceptions and objects connected with them by a rule are real. But how recognize a perception? A perception is a vivid object of experience; consequently no vivid object of experience is unreal.

There are other definitions of reality implicit in Kant than those I have brought out. Some are implied in passages I have not mentioned, while others may be inferred from passages I have given, provided a different interpretation be given the term "experience." But the senses in which Kant can be taken to use "real" to mean sense-data are, roughly speaking, two. He calls "real" the crude material, taken now as mere elementary data, now as thing-in-itself. And he calls "real" the complete, informed objects of sense-perception and the entities connected with them by a rule. The meaning of real when used in the first of these two senses is not ambiguous, though the entities denoted by it are practically without content. In so far as vivid objects of experience and entities connected with them are real, we lack any good criterion to distinguish the real from that which is a "mere idea." "Reality" in this sense is rather indefinite; the reality of vivid objects of perception is well assured, but which objects are connected with these vivid objects, and which are not, is not sufficiently determined.[62]

Since Kant these varying definitions of "reality" have gone on repeating themselves. And the men in whose writings these definitions are implied have been at even less pains, if possible, to make their definitions explicit and to justify or to acknowledge the lack of justification for the various senses in which they have used the term. In particular, the two senses in which Kant used "real" to mean sense-data have become commonplaces. The physicist Mach, for example, uses "real" in almost exactly the first of the two senses in which Kant used "real" to mean sense-data. For Mach, as in part for Kant, it is the crude material, the data without the infiltration of any mental elements, that alone are "real." Nature is composed of "sensa-

[62] Cf. however: *infra.*, pp. 71–73.

tions" as its elements.[63] These crude entities, he implies, are alone "there." By way of contrast, all mental constructs, such as hypotheses and abstractions, are unreal. "Atoms cannot be perceived by the senses," he finds; therefore "like all substances they are things of thought" and implicitly unreal.[64] The crude data alone are real. Substances are ideal abstractions and hypotheses ideal constructions for the sake of economy. The crude data or what Avenarius calls "pure experience"—for Avenarius holds a similar position—are the only objects of which we can be conscious without adding a mental construct. "Real" consequently means them alone.

Another physicist, Karl Pearson, makes sense-data and entities connected with sense-data "real." He uses "real" in practically the same sense as that in which Kant uses it when he calls sense-data and entities connected with sense-data "real." "The reality of a thing," Pearson says,[65] "depends upon the possibility of its occurring in whole or part as a group of immediate sense-impressions." And "*a sine qua non* of the existence of an *actual* black-board is some immediate sense-impression to start with."[66] Not merely actual sense-data, however, but possible sense-data inferred from actual data, are real. "I have heard of the Capitol at Washington," says Pearson,[67] "and although I have never been to America, I am convinced of the reality of America and the Capitol—that is, I believe certain sense-impressions would be experienced by me if I put myself in the proper circumstances." On the other hand, entities that are neither actual nor possible sense-data are unreal. Atoms, molecules, electrons, mathematical points, lines, and surfaces, the ether, matter—all are unreal, in so far as they have not become objects of perception.[68] At times when Pearson wants to give to some of these unreal entities a name that for him has a particularly disagreeable connotation, he calls them "metaphysical." It is in such an invidious manner that he talks about ether and matter, about "force"

[63] Mach.: Science of Mechanics (Chicago, 1907), p. 482.
[64] *Ibid;* p. 492.
[65] Karl Pearson: Grammar of Science, 3d Edition, Part 1, p. 41.
[66] *Ibid:* p. 40.
[67] *Ibid:* p. 40.
[68] *Ibid:* pp. 193, 286.

and about an hypostatized "will." Apropos of the last two he says:[69] "Both carry us into the region beyond our sense-impressions; both are therefore metaphysical." Sense-data and entities connected with sense-data are real. Some other entities in the course of time reveal themselves as actual sense-data or as entities connected with actual sense-data, that is, as possible sense-data. Thereupon it becomes possible for us to attribute reality to them. But of other entities that have not shown themselves to be possible sense-data we cannot assert existence. And those entities that can never be objects of possible experience—such as mathematical points—are for Pearson definitely labelled "unreal." The vivid objects of sense-perception are real. The objects connected with sense-data, that are also real, are the objects that would be sense-data "if I put myself in the proper circumstances." The objects connected with sense-data are consequently delimited to a certain extent, but certainly not to an extent sufficient to enable us to tell whether any given object is to be called "real" or "unreal." So far as the entities connected with sense-data are concerned, the definition, that is to say, suffers from the same indefiniteness that we found in Hume's meaning of "real" and in Kant's—when Kant uses "real" to refer to the objects of experience and the entities related to them.

Another recent writer to use "real" to denote sense-data is William James. His "real" points now to a hazy thing-in-itself, now to the objects of sense-perception as we know them. In his accounts of the genesis of thought he falls back upon a thing-in-itself that is objective and real and that sets the processes of consciousness going. We start with a simple, unanalyzed "that," he tells us, something quite lacking in definiteness and hence unattainable after early childhood. This is sensation, the function of which "is that of mere *acquaintance* with a fact."[70] With its pristine innocence, however, it, and it alone, puts us in contact with reality. Or, as James says, it is only consciousness with the "sensational *tang*" that "directly *encounters* (to use a word of Mr. Bradley's) a reality outside itself."[71] It is an unattainable thing-in-itself, consequently, a thing-in-itself

[69] *Ibid:* p. 119.
[70] James: Principles of Psychology, 1890, vol. 2, p. 2.
[71] *Ibid:* vol. 2, p. 6.

to which the original "blooming, buzzing confusion" most nearly corresponds, that James is using the term "real" to point out.

But at other times, and indeed more often, it is things as we know them that are real. The vivid sense-perceptions of a jumping, barking, hairy body "*are* the real dog, the dog's full presence for my common sense."[72] It is the vivid objects of sensation succeeding one another in a stream of consciousness that give us the content of reality. "Dive back into the flux itself, then," James says[73] in paraphrasing Bergson, whose thought he endorses, "if you wish to *know* reality, that flux which Platonism, in its strange belief that only the immutable is excellent, has always spurned; turn your face toward sensation, that flesh-bound thing which rationalism has always loaded with abuse." All content that is given by sensation is real, all content that is not so given is unreal.[74] "Every examiner of the sensible life *in concreto* must see that relations of every sort, of time, space, difference, likeness, change, rate, cause, or what not, are just as integral members of the sensational flux as terms are."[75] Therefore relations are real. However, not merely actual sense-data are real. As with Hume, with Kant, and with Pearson, entities connected with sense-data are real. As with all of these men, however, the distinction between those entities that are real by reason of their connection with sense-data and those entities that are unreal because they lack such connection is not drawn so clearly as might be desired. Events remembered to have taken place in the past seem to be called "real," if there is a continuity from them to the sense-data present.[76] Another statement implies that entities not sense-data now and for me are real if they "can be experienced at some definite time by some experient."[77] And another criterion is the one that makes entities not sense-data real if the thought of them "leads" me into the presence of them.[78] But with any or all of these criteria,

[72] James: Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 198.
[73] James: A Pluralistic Universe, p. 252.
[74] James: Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 42.
[75] A Pluralistic Universe, p. 279.
[76] Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 213.
[77] *Ibid:* p. 160.
[78] *Ibid:* p. 55.

the distinction, I say, between those entities not sense-data that are real and those that are unreal is quite vague.

Besides these meanings of "real," there are times when James uses the term in still other senses, times when "real" means neither the elemental thing-in-itself nor sense-data as we know them and their derivatives. James tends in some passages to use the term in a sense that makes all things "real," and so makes the term quite valueless. He does not deny that concepts and the relations between them are just as real in their "eternal" way as percepts are in their temporal way.[79] In his broad-minded desire to recognize all elements in the universe, he seems to me to give "reality" at times so broad a meaning that it loses all connotation and becomes altogether unserviceable.

I quoted above a passage in which James shows his agreement with Bergson with regard to the ontological status of sense-data. Bergson, that is to say, is another who at times uses "real" to mean sense-data. Like so many of the recent writers who imply this definition of reality, however, he apparently regards this meaning as so entirely a matter of common-sense that he nowhere comes near making it explicit. Through a large part of his writings the implication is apparent that, to get at the world as it is, we must take from our objects the part that is added by the intellect and so get at the crude data. "We must appeal to experience—an experience purified, or, in other words, released, where necessary, from the molds that our intellect has formed in the degree and proportion of the progress of our action on things."[80] Time and states of consciousness have really no magnitude. As we are aware of them they have a magnitude, it is true, but this magnitude is read into them by intellect. *Real* time, states of consciousness as they *really* are, are without any such magnitude. Spatial entities come through the process of getting known unscathed; their content is not distorted. That is to say, the mind is well equipped to handle such entities. But temporal entities have their content altered in the process of getting known. And so do psychological data. "Now just as, in order to ascertain the real relations

[79] James: Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 101. Cf. also: Some Problems of Philosophy, p. 78, and Essays in Radical Empiricism, p. 17.

[80] Bergson: Creative Evolution; translation by Mitchell, p. 363.

of physical phenomena to one another, we abstract whatever obviously clashes with them in our way of perceiving and thinking, so, in order to view the self in its original purity, psychology ought to eliminate or correct certain forms which bear the obvious mark of the external world."[81] It is the crude material, then, that is real. That part of the objects of our consciousness that is due to intellect is unreal. "Real" is being used once more in the sense in which it means crude data.

And there are many other arguments, so common that they need not be identified with any one man, that imply the reality of sense-data. Where we find the word "assumption" there is nearly always this meaning of reality lurking in the background. The reality of sense-data is seldom "assumed"; it is undoubted. But the reality of entities that are not sense-data is not quite certain; such entities are hypothetical, they are assumptions.

Then, there are the apologists for religion who say that there are many things we do and must believe on faith, and that God belongs in this class. The implication is that sense-data are unquestionably real.[82] Other entities are probably real, are to be held as real though we have not seen them but have them only on authority or hearsay; and it is argued that there should be attributed to God this same inferred reality that we give to earthly entities we do not ourselves directly experience. Those who deny God because He is not a sense-datum are, of course, using "real" in this same sense. God is unreal because "real" is being used to denote sense-data exclusively.

And finally there are such questions as: How are universal judgments possible? We can know the particular cases that we or others have met with in experience, but how can we know those particulars that are subsumed under the universal which we have not yet experienced? We can undoubtedly make true judgments about objects of experience, but a knowledge of other objects is questionable. Sense-data are real; the knowledge of them raises no question. But other objects, in what sense are they real, or, at least, knowable? In all of these cases "real" is used to

[81] Bergson: Time and Free Will; translation by Pogson, pp. 223, 224.
[82] St. Augustine: Confessions, VI, 5.

denote with certainty all sense-data, while the application of the term to other entities is fraught with some doubt, calls for some hesitation and requires explanation.

One man uses "real" to mean the crude data, another to mean objects of "experience"; one to mean causes of perception, another to mean objects of perception; one to mean sense-data alone, another to mean objects of memory also, and still another to mean, in addition, any entity vaguely connected with sense-data. All these are shades of meaning given to "real" while that term, generally speaking, still points especially towards sense-data. Now, the account I have given of these "reals" is like an elementary history of philosophy that would content itself with: "Thales said: 'All is water'; Anaximander said: 'All is the indefinite'"; that is, it is like a syllabus that catalogs the opinions men have held without stating the reasons for these opinions. I have mentioned Epicurus, Bacon, Locke, Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Mach, Pearson, James and Bergson, and to each I have attributed one or more meanings of "real"; but I have not explained why, for each of these men, "real" has the meaning that it has. The fault, however, is not mine, but theirs. Notwithstanding the fact that "real" is used in so many different senses, a writer will clearly imply that the term has, for him, one of these meanings in particular; and still he will give no reason for his choice, nor even call attention to the fact that he might have chosen differently.

In fact, no one seems to be aware that he might have chosen differently. To each "Reality" seems to consist, fixedly and objectively, of those entities that he has denoted "real." He seems not to know that reality is not "there" before the term "real" is given a meaning; nor is he aware that a different reality is there if "real" is defined differently. And so he confidently makes assertions that follow directly from the definition of reality he has assumed, but which would by no means be true were "real" interpreted in a different sense. Perhaps he says with some feeling: "To know reality we must appeal to experience." This is quite true if "real" has the sort of meaning we have chiefly considered in this chapter, if it means sense-data, experienced entities. But if "real" denotes the sort of entities that are not experienced—Platonic ideas, mathematical

formulæ, the Infinite, the miracles of the Old and New Testaments—this statement is quite as evidently untrue. Sensationalism, that is to say, may be quite close to one's heart, and yet be based entirely on the definition of "reality" that is implied. The question: "How are universal judgments possible?" would not excite one who did not start out with a bias towards the ontological priority of sense-data. And so, too, with anti-intellectualism. The dissatisfaction both James and Bergson feel with the intellect results from the fact that the objects of intellectualized awareness are not "real"—"real" being taken in the special sense in which it means sense-data. So much that we hold important is apt to depend on the definition of "reality" implied, that we ought at least to make this definition explicit and to state the reason we employ the definition we do rather than some other.

CHAPTER IV

The Real as that which is Related.

A great number of the events that pass before our consciousness seem to accord with one another quite well; they form, so to speak, a coherent group of phenomena. All of the members of this group are, for example, in space, each one being at a certain distance from each other one. Or they are all in time; any one is simultaneous with, or before, or after, some other one. Perhaps we consider them as all being subject to the same laws; there are striking similarities, we say, in the way all of them behave. If we have near the earth an unsupported body whose density is greater than that of the air around it, it always falls to the ground. Whenever a body is tilted so that its center of mass falls beyond its base, the body always, if left to itself, tumbles over. All of these entities form, in short, a system of coherent, related phenomena. But there are other objects that we are sometimes aware of that do not fit into this system. In our dreams, in books, or even in our waking life, we are aware of objects that behave in ways that do not accord with our usual experience. We meet with dogs that speak, with fairy godmothers, with giants and ogres and centaurs and unicorns. Now, it is not unusual to call these objects that do not agree with our ordinary experience unreal and to call those that fit into a coherent system real. Using "real" in this sense, entities that form part of an interrelated whole are real, and those outside of this system are unreal. The real entity is the one that coheres in an ordered universe of related phenomena. And the unreal entity is the one that is eccentric, peculiar, unrelated to the world with which we are accustomed to deal.

Basing his interpretation on certain passages in the *Saggiatore,*[83] Cassirer[84] says that Galileo holds that a large part of science is to be concerned with the derivation of

[83] Galileo: *Opere,* vol. 4, pp. 174, 258 (Edition by Alberi).

[84] Cassirer: *Das Erkenntnisproblem,* Second Edition, vol. 1, pp. 389, 390.

phenomena from one another, and that "as long as this derivation is not reached we possess no guarantee that we move in the realm of true Being and not in an invented world of fable." That is to say, it is the entities that form an interrelated system that are real, and the isolated, unrelated ones that are unreal; and it is only when we are aware of its interrelations that we can be sure a phenomenon before us is real. An entity related to the general system of entities, accordingly, is real. The term "real" is used to point to these entities; it *means* these entities. We have before us, consequently, one of these cases where "real" points to the component parts of a coherent system, and where "unreal" points to the unrelated entity that stands outside of this system. An entity to be "real" in this sense of the term must sustain certain relations to other parts of the universe.

But, we may ask, what sort of relations must an entity have in order thus to be called "real?" It is not, accordingly to Cassirer, on the basis of its co-ordination with other individual phenomena that Galileo calls an entity "real." It is only when the object in question agrees with the generalizations that are called scientific laws that it is real. When a phenomenon is consistent with these laws it is real, when it is inconsistent with them it is unreal, and when its relation to these laws of nature is not known we possess no assurance of its reality. Can we say that such a notion of reality, whether it be really Galileo's or be incorrectly attributed to him by Cassirer, is true or false? We can, indeed, ask whether, by an application of this definition to individual entities, the same entities would be called "real" that are so called in ordinary parlance. But it would be extremely hard to find out except in the most unenlightening terms what entities are called "real" in ordinary parlance. For the present, then, let us be content simply to regard this notion of reality as involving a conceivable definition of the term "real." It is not to be described as true or false, but merely as possible.

In our dreaming as in our waking life we are aware of objects. In the one as well as in the other there passes before our consciousness a series of events of the greatest variety—battles, conversations, murders, loves. But the one

series of events is usually called "unreal" and the other for the most part called "real." Now when we start out with a determination to call dream entities "unreal," we are usually led to a use of the term "real" according to which this term is applied to phenomena belonging to a system of interrelated entities, and is not applied to unrelated entities. For when we attempt to find the marks that distinguish dream objects from others, the distinction that is most frequently hit upon is the incoherence and absurdity of the former, the impossibility of fitting them into our experience as a whole, and the coherence and unbroken connections between the parts of the latter. It is not the lack of vividness that distinguishes dream objects, for, as Hobbes says,[85] "they are clearer than the imaginations of waking men, except such as are made by sense itself, to which they are equal in clearness." No, the distinguishing characteristic of dream objects is their unrelatedness; it is this unrelatedness that makes them dreams and makes them unreal. Consequently, when we call dreams "unreal," we are usually using "real" in the sense in which it means the related entity and "unreal" in the sense in which it means the unrelated one. "Real," accordingly, is being given a meaning similar to that which we have just discussed in connection with Galileo. And "unreal" again means the strange incoherent object that stands outside of the system of entities that are related to one another and that behave in similar ways.

Descartes comes to use "real" in this sense when he considers the characteristics of dream entities. "And I ought," he says at the end of his "Meditations," "to set aside all the doubts of these past few days as hyperbolical and ridiculous, especially that very common uncertainty respecting sleep, which I could not distinguish from the waking state; for at present I find a very notable difference between the two, inasmuch as our memory can never connect our dreams one with the other, or with the whole course of our lives, as it unites events which happen to us while we are awake. And, as a matter of fact, if some one, while I was awake, quite suddenly appeared to me and disappeared as fast as do the images which I see in sleep, so that I could not know from whence the form came nor whither it went, it would not

[85] Hobbes: *De Corpore*, part 4, chapter 25, section 9.

be without reason that I should deem it a spectre or a phantom formed by my brain [and similar to those which I form in sleep], rather than a real man." That is to say, dreams are unconnected and waking life is connected. And dream objects, it is implied, are unreal, and the connected objects of waking life real. "Real," accordingly, is being used to mean that which is related and "unreal" to mean that which is unrelated. And the interrelation that is insisted upon with respect to real objects is not merely a consistency with, and deducibility from, the general laws of science. A phenomenon to be real, as Descartes seems to say in the same paragraph, must be one such that no evidence can be brought forward by the senses, the memory, or the understanding, that is repugnant to it.

Let us stop here for a while to examine this notion of repugnance. Let us see what sort of evidence might be brought forward that would be repugnant to a given object. There are undoubtedly propositions that Galileo and Descartes would have considered intelligible laws. We may mention as examples the rule that every event has a cause and the law that all bodies fall to the earth with a constant acceleration. Accordingly, a phenomenon that had no cause, or one whose motion towards the earth took place in a different fashion, would be a phenomenon repugnant to these intelligible laws. Since, moreover, consistency with these laws is a requisite of reality, such an entity would be an unreal entity. Now such a rule seems to me to give a perfectly self-consistent method of separating out certain phenomena as unreal, though the reach of phenomena to which it may be applied is limited by the number of intelligible laws that are definitely laid down. One cannot, for example, apply this rule to exclude from reality my riding in an aeroplane last Tuesday unless there is some intelligible law with which such a phenomenon is inconsistent. And these laws must, I say, be laid down with some definiteness; otherwise it would be impossible to apply them. It may be mentioned that, if reality is defined in this way, the particular laws that are laid down become immune from overthrow by what are known as negative instances, for the negative instances are thrown out by definition as unreal entities. But it is none the less possible to lay down definite proposi-

tions as intelligible laws and to call those entities that are consistent with them real and those that are inconsistent with them unreal. We have here, consequently, another definition of reality, or rather many definitions, since the content of reality will vary as the specific propositions that are laid down as intelligible laws vary. It is definitions of this species that Galileo and Descartes imply, I think, insofar as they use the term "real" to point to entities that are consistent with the eternal verities that may be called intelligible laws and the term "unreal" to point to entities that are inconsistent with them.

But Descartes also requires that a phenomenon that is to be called "real" be consistent with the evidence of the senses and the memory, with, in short, "the whole course of our lives." That men should be turned into stones, or should come to life again when once dead, does not accord, we say, with our experience. But there is a difference to be noticed between the sort of accordance spoken of here and that spoken of above. In the absence of the sort of consistency that was demanded above there is real contradiction. That event A should occur without a cause is contradictory to the law that all events have causes. But the assertion that a man has turned into a stone does not assert a phenomenon that, precisely speaking, is *contradicted* by our experience. Such a phenomenon is one that our experience has not accustomed us to expect; but our experience being limited to particulars cannot contradict it, cannot render it impossible. Such phenomena are sometimes experienced; visions of the Virgin Mary are by no means unknown. But they are phenomena that we are not accustomed to experience. And so a phenomenon that does not accord with our experience is one that is of a kind that we do not usually experience. It is a *rara avis* that is dissimilar to what we usually meet with in the course of our lives. Such a characterization of the unreal, however, is as yet, I am afraid, too vague. It is not sufficiently definite to afford us a means of picking out any group of specific events as unreal. For what is the usual? The experiencing of devils was not at all unusual in the Middle Ages, nor was the experiencing of witches unusual in the sixteenth century. To determine what is usual, we are forced to engage in a counting of

numbers with the range of the field of entities that are to be counted quite undetermined. If we limit ourselves to the experience of the sixteenth century witches are not unusual, though if we take into consideration the experience of subsequent centuries they are. Again, substances that give off emanations are unusual in our experience, though pieces of radium that give off such emanations are not rare. Witches that can fly through the air are not rare; most witches have that power. But women in general who go flying through the air on broomsticks are met with quite seldom. What is usual, in short, depends entirely on the range of phenomena we take into consideration. It depends on what subjects we pick out whose experiences are to be investigated, and on how narrowly we circumscribe the phenomena whose reality is to be considered.

And so when we simply say that an entity to be real must accord with our experience and do not lay down more specifically the sort of consistency that is to be demanded, we are without a rule by which we can exclude entities from reality with any definiteness. We must have some specific sort of consistency with experience demanded, so that we can tell by applying this rule to an individual phenomenon whether that phenomenon is meant to be called "real" or not. More concrete demands of this kind are sometimes laid down. Sometimes it is said that an entity to be real must be experienced not only by ourselves but by those around us: A ghost that I see but that no one in the room with me sees is unreal. Such a rule seems to me to give a serviceable definition of reality. If we make such a demand of reality, only that is "real" which is experienced by more than one, while the realm of the unreal includes all those entities which are experienced by but a single consciousness. Or it is demanded that for an entity to be "real" one must be able to repeat it and to predict it. The phenomenon must be a recurring phenomenon and we must be able to predict its behavior when it does recur. Here too we have a rather specific definition of reality. It enables us to call radium emanations "real" and Jacob's ladder up to heaven "unreal." I believe that the class of entities marked out as unreal by each of these definitions excludes some entities that are commonly called "real." I believe common sense, for

example, would call many phenomena that occur but once "real" and would call the creation of some entrancing color a real event, though perhaps it could not be repeated. But I do not want to enter into this very deeply, for I find it quite impossible in many cases to tell what common sense would call "real." The naive man's use of the term "real" is as inchoate as the contradictions between the many senses in which philosophers have used the term would have led one to expect it to be; and his use of it has varied from generation to generation as the philosopher's has, from the Middle Ages when devils were "real" to now when they are, I suppose, "unreal." But these two definitions are, none the less, ways in which "real" may be defined.

In mentioning these two more specific sorts of consistency with experience that may be demanded of real entities, I have anticipated somewhat. For Leibniz is the first philosopher in whose writings I have found them laid down.

Leibniz uses the "real" to mean "that which is related" to a much greater extent than does any previous philosopher. With him the notion is by no means thrown out in stray passages; it is a notion that is expressed frequently and with considerable elaboration. The world of real entities is conceived as a system of interrelated compossible entities. And on the other hand, an unreal entity is one that finds no place open for it in this system, one that lacks the manifold relations that characterize real entities. For the world of real entities is chocked full of relations; each one of these entities enters into relations with the others so that all together they form an organic system in which each bit is essential. We cannot tamper with the slightest part without having the whole universe, so to speak, come tumbling down on our hands. And while all the entities within the system are inextricably bound to one another, they are jointly and severally free from relations with entities outside it. And so we have this notion that the real is that which is related quite unmistakably before us. An entity is "real" if it belongs in the system, if it sustains the sort of relations that all real entities do sustain towards one another. And it is "unreal" if it comes without antecedents and goes without consequents, a stranger that has no connection with the interrelated world we know.

But just what sort of relations are we talking about? What sort of relations does an entity that is within the system and is to be called "real" sustain? And what sort of relations does an "unreal" entity that is outside the system lack? As with Descartes, what are demanded of real entities are relations with the intelligible laws and with the course of our experience. "The basis of the truth of contingent and singular things is in the succession which causes these phenomena of the senses to be rightly united as the intelligible truths demand."[86] And a phenomenon to be real must agree with experience. "Undoubtedly," says Leibniz,[87] "the strongest proof" (of the reality of phenomena, he means) "is the agreement with the whole course of life." Entities that do so agree with the whole course of life he uses the term "real" to denote. And entities that lack this consistency with experience he calls "unreal." "We can neither know nor ought we to desire anything of sensible things than that they harmonize as well among themselves as with indubitable reasons, and in such a way that future things may in a certain degree be foreseen from past things. Any other truth or reality will be sought in them in vain than that which this vouches for, nor ought sceptics ask anything else nor the dogmatics promise it.[88] For it is these interrelated entities, as I look at it, that the term "real" means. They are "real" because Leibniz is calling them "real." And men moving through the air, "sitting upon the hyppogryphs of Ariosto,"[89] are "unreal" because they do not accord with experience and therefore belong to the class of entities that Leibniz designates by the term "unreal." That which is related is the real and that which is unrelated the unreal. This is the meaning Leibniz gives these words. At times, indeed, there is a more definite description of the characteristics of the related entities that are real. Real entities are now those that appear in the experience of others and now—and this, indeed, is insisted

[86] Leibniz: New Essays on the Human Understanding, Bk. 4, ch. 4, section 4.

[87] Langley: Leibniz's New Essays, etc. (1916), p. 718; Gerhardt, vol. 7, p. 320.

[88] Duncan: Philosophical Works of Leibniz, 2nd ed., p. 48—Animadversions on Descartes's Principles of Philosophy"—On Article 4.

[89] Langley: New Essays, etc. (1916), p. 718; Gerhardt, vol. 7, p. 320.

on more frequently—they are entities that can be foretold. But it is not their vividness that makes these objects real and not their clearness and distinctness; it is their relatedness.

To a considerable extent, however, even entities that are related are not surely real. A "real" entity becomes quite mysterious and its properties quite undiscoverable. There is hardly any entity that one can put one's finger on and say with assurance that it is denoted by the term "real." Even if an entity has all of the relations that have been mentioned, we still cannot be quite sure that it is meant by the term "real." "By no argument can it be absolutely demonstrated that there are bodies, nor anything keep certain well-ordered dreams from being objects to our mind which are considered by us as true, and on account of the agreement among themselves with respect to use are equivalent to truths."[90] Such well-ordered dreams would still be dreams and as such unreal. Most related entities are, indeed, real, but some, in spite of their relations, may be unreal. We never can tell whether an entity before us is real or not, and that not because we are unable to *discover* the qualities that go with reality, but because there *are* no qualities—such as we have taken relatedness to be—that invariably go with reality—because there is no definite class of entities that "real" is being used to point out—because, in short, the term "real" is being used without meaning. If, no matter how much of relatedness or of whatever other quality you please we admit in bodies, we still can not say that bodies exist, then "existence" is being used without meaning. Agnosticism is a conceivable theory if reality is given some rather definite content and that content declared undiscoverable. But it is meaningless if the term "reality" that points to what is forever hidden points to nothing that can be conceived. And that is the sort of agnosticism we have here. Reality has no definite characteristics; related entities as well as unrelated ones may be unreal; the term "real" points to nothing.

Yet in spite of his wavering it was Leibniz who brought into fashion this notion that the "fictitious" phenomenon is the strange event out of accord with experience and the

[90] Langley: New Essays, etc., p. 719; Gerhardt; vol. 7, p. 320.

"real" event the one that belongs to an interrelated system. The romance of Astraea is unreal because it does not fit in with our world; it could only be real if all our world were different.[91] Dream objects, hyppogryphs, and all such entities are unreal because they are strange phenomena that stand outside of the connections that relate the various parts of our ordinary experience and are not subject to the uniformities that hold there. Christian Wolff takes up the same theme; he uses the term "unreal" to point to the same class of entities. In a dream "while you look at someone, he suddenly changes into someone else or he vanishes straightway and no one comes back to take his place."[92] Things happen in a strange, haphazard, and unreasonable manner. And it is this that distinguishes them from real entities and makes them dreams. In the interrelations of real entities there is order, and in dreams there is none. Consequently, "order distinguishes truth from fable."[93] The "real" is the ordered, the related; and, since all the relations that hold between the ordinary objects of our experience are summed up in the principle of sufficient reason, a real entity is one that is subject to the principle of sufficient reason. "If the principle of sufficient reason is removed, the real world turns into a fictitious world in which we must look to the will of man rather than to reason for the explanation of the things that happen.[94] It is order, then, subjection to the principle of sufficient reason, that "real" means. An *ens verum,* a real entity, is defined as one in which "order is given in the qualities that meet in it."[95] But what sort of order is required is not said; the meaning of the term is left more formal and indefinite than by Leibniz.

According to Wolff, if we take away the principle of sufficient reason the real world turns into the world of fiction. We can have no reality at all without it, or, in other words, order, relatedness, is a *presupposition* of reality. Of course, relatedness is a presupposition of reality taken in the sense in which Wolff uses that term. For, for him

[91] Letter to Bourget. Latta: Monadology, etc., p. 64, note 2; Gerhardt, vol. 3, p. 572.

[92] Wolff: *Ontologia,* § 493.

[93] *Ibid:* § 494.

[94] *Ibid:* § 77. Cf. also: *Vernünftiges Gedanken von Gott, der Welt, auch allen Dingen überhaupt,* § 142, *et seq.*

[95] *Ontologia,* § 496.

reality *means* relatedness, and naturally, if there is no relatedness there can be no reality. It is just as correct, however, to say that reality is a presupposition of relatedness. For if all reality were done away with, there could be none of the relatedness that is equivalent to it. The assertion that relatedness is the presupposition of reality comes to no more and to no less than the definition of the real as the related. It is defining the term "real;" though, in view of the indefinite character of the demand that an entity be consistent with the whole course of our lives, it is giving a definition that is not very serviceable. And it is one definition out of many. The "real" may be defined as that which is clear and distinct or as the vivid object of consciousness as easily as it may be defined as the related. And so when Wolff and Kant talk about the presuppositions of reality, they are not coming to the subject with a more fundamental consideration than anyone else. They are bringing forward their own notion of reality, a notion that requires further elaboration if it is to be at all serviceable in distinguishing the real from the unreal, but one that at least potentially is a definition of reality.

In Kant the notion that the real is that which is related is rather common. In our discussion of the view that identifies the real primarily with sense-data, we have already considered those passages in the "Critique of Pure Reason" that say that "whatever is connected according to empirical laws with a perception is real."[96] In those passages perceptions are called "real," certainly. But so is the whole group of entities connected with them, the entities that with them form an ordered system of interrelated entities. From one point of view "real" in these passages means perceptions and the entities connected with them. But from another point of view it means the elements in an ordered concatenated whole of which perceptions are a part. How, now, are we to tell an entity that *is* connected with a perception according to empirical laws from one that is not? In short, what sort of relatedness to a perception must an entity show in order to be "real"? We have noticed above two sorts of relations that may be demanded of entities that are to be called "real." Either it is required that such real entities be in accord with the whole course of experi-

[96] Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, 1st edition, p. 376. Cf. also p. 225.

ence. Or it is required that they do not contradict definite intelligible laws. In Kant's case it is the latter requirement rather than the former that is emphasized. A "real" entity is one that is connected with a perception in the way that the concepts of the understanding require. And more particularly, a "real" entity is one such that its relation to a perception does not contradict the *a priori* laws laid down in the "Analogies of Experience." For a phenomenon to be called "real" then, it must not contradict the law that the quantity of substance is permanent, the law that every event has a cause, or the law that there is dynamical interaction between contemporaneous entities. I describe these laws as being laid down so that existence may be defined in terms of them; Kant calls them presuppositions of existence. It is through the concepts of the understanding alone "that knowledge and determination of an object become possible."[97] With respect to the second of these three laws he makes this assertion more frequently. It is the relation of cause and effect, he says, "which forms the condition of the objective validity of our empirical judgments with regard to the series of perceptions, and, therefore, also the condition of the empirical truth of them and of experience."[98] And again:[99] "The law of nature that everything which happens has a cause, ... this law, through which alone phenomena become *nature* and objects of experience, is a law of the understanding which can on no account be surrendered and from which no single phenomenon can be exempted; because in doing this we should place it outside all possible experience, separate from all objects of possible experience, and change it into a mere fiction of the mind or a cobweb of the brain." There are two ways in which these laws can become the conditions of existence. Either existence has first a definite meaning, and then this meaning is found to be such that whatever is real is consistent with these laws; or else these laws are first laid down, and then the "unreal" is defined as what is inconsistent with them and "real" given a definition to correspond. The former is undoubtedly the more usual way of looking at the relation between these laws and reality. But if reality is such a vague concept, meaningless until defined, we cannot make

[97] Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, 1st edition, p. 310.

[98] *Ibid:* p. 202.

[99] *Ibid:* p. 542.

it a point of departure in our argumentation without first defining it. We *may* say that Kant means by reality those particular entities that are consistent with these three laws and that thence he concludes that these three laws are conditions of existence. But, assuming now that reality has been used in many different senses, a certain amount of arbitrariness must come in at some point. And so it is quite as correct to say that Kant lays down these three laws and means by the "real" that which is consistent with them and by the "unreal" that which contradicts them.

Inconsistency here means real contradiction. We are not troubled with the demand for a vague "accordance with experience" that depends on whose experience and on how much experience we consider; the "unreal" is that which actually contradicts one of three specific laws. An apparition that comes and goes again, that causes for a few minutes a sudden increase in the quantity of substance in the universe, is "unreal." So is a ghost that has no cause, that springs up from no place; and so is an isolated phenomenon that seems neither to affect nor to be affected by the entities around it. These laws, as I remarked in discussing Galileo, are immune from overthrow by negative instances. If I am aware of an apparent increase in the amount of substance in the world, the increase of substance is unreal. The term "unreal" *means* all phenomena that increase the total quantity of substance. If we find an event without a cause, we do not have to investigate further to determine its reality; the term "unreal" by definition points to just such an object. We have here a perfectly possible way in which the term "real" may be used. The difficulty, of course, is that these laws are far from definite. If we were told just what a cause is and just what constitutes dynamical interaction, our definition of reality would be much more serviceable. If dynamical interaction were something quite clear and specific, there would be certain entities that we should immediately be able to call "unreal." But with "dynamical interaction" a vague and unexplained term, no entities immediately appear to be unreal. No entities are such that they cannot be conceived to fit in with experience in some way.

The real is sometimes said to be that which is active, that which has power to do and capacity to suffer, that which

can act and be acted upon. Plato considers this sense of the word "real" in the "Sophist." He says, "My notion would be that anything which possesses any sort of power to affect another, or to be affected by another, if only for a single moment, however trifling the cause and however slight the effect, has real existence; and I hold that the definition of being is simply power."[100] But what does it mean to be active? How can we pick out those entities that have power from those that haven't it? Surely no entities come to us pretending to be inactive. All seem able to do and to suffer. Dragons can slay, and, with courage and good fortune, can be slain; devils are fearful only because of their power for evil. Therefore in order to get a definite content for the inactive and a limited content for the active, the notion of activity must be defined and made specific. Often, however, we find it said that the real is the active and find no further explanation. Aristotle distinguishes between the potential and the actual. He too calls the real the actual, that which possesses activity, that which has an entelechy. For Leibniz again the real is that which possesses force. And several Germans since his day, perhaps on account of the common ancestry of the noun *"Wirklichkeit"* and the verb *"wirken"* have described reality in similar terms. For example Platner, whom we shall mention later in another connection, says that to exist is to act and to act is to exist.[101] But all of these definitions of reality tell us very little. We are almost as unable to distinguish the real from the unreal with them as we should be without them. What we need is to have this concept of activity defined in such a way that the inactive will have some content. To say that the real is the active is as valueless as it is to say that the real is that which stands in dynamical communion with other entities. Indeed the definition of the real as the active is exactly equivalent to Kant's assertion that for an entity to be real it must be subject to the third law laid down in the "Analogies of Experience." That which can act and be acted upon is that which stands in a dynamical communion with the objects contemporaneous with it. And just as the principle of dynamical communion is, as we have seen, indefinite, so the

[100] Plato: Sophist, 246e–247e.

[101] Platner: *Philosophische Aphorismen,* § 739, Note

notion of activity is indefinite. With neither concept can we point to any entities and say with assurance that they are real or that they are unreal.

The real, it has been said, is that which is related. More specifically, reality has been limited to those entities that are in accord with our experience or to those that obey certain intelligible laws. More specific yet, however, is the definition of reality that defines real entities as those that are in space and in time. For when we are told that all real objects are related to one another by being in the same space and the same time, we have a definition that gives the unreal some content. Many objects appear not to be in space and many objects appear not to be in time. If, consequently, we define reality in terms of time and space, these objects are forthwith unreal. Here then we have indeed come upon something that may be used to mark out the real from the unreal, something that enables us to say forthwith that certain definite entities are unreal.

We have already met with a passage in Plato that lays down the thesis that whatever is not in time is unreal. An object that does not participate in time does not participate in being.[102] When we come down to Hobbes, we find a similar attitude taken with respect to space. "If the triangle exists nowhere at all," he writes, "I do not understand how it can have any nature; for that which exists nowhere does not exist."[103] Sometimes it is required of a real entity only that it be in time, sometimes only that it be in space. But more often the two requirements are joined. Reality is made conditional upon the possession of both a position in time and a location in space. As Crusius, one of the philosophers who wrote shortly before Kant, puts it, to give an entity that is merely thought—that is, merely possible—a position in time and a place in space is to give it existence.[104] "If a substance is to exist, it must exist immediately in some place and at some time."[105]

[102] Plato: Parmenides, 141, 152.

[103] Hobbes: The Third Set of Objections to Descartes' Meditations—Objection Fourteenth; Descartes: *Oeuvres,* ed. by Adam and Tannery, vol. 9, p. 150.

[104] Crusius: *Entwurf der Notwendigen Vernunft-Wahrheiten,* 1753, Sec. 46.

[105] *Ibid;* Sec. 57. See also Sec. 59.

Here we have a serviceable definition of reality, one that enables us to pronounce with assurance upon the ontological status of many objects. It does indeed make many objects unreal that are often called real. It rules out of existence a supra-spatial God, and the "eternal verities," if they are indeed eternal. The meaning of real, if the term is used in this sense, is not exactly that which it has in common speech; but it is none the less rather definite.

There are one or two subjects, however, on which this definition is as yet not quite specific. After Crusius had described the real as that which is in time and in space, Platner, in commenting upon this definition, raised an objection. He objected because such a definition, he said, presupposes the existence of time and space themselves.[106] In our own day much the same objection has been raised by Marvin.[107] Notwithstanding these probably independent expressions of dissatisfaction with the definition we are considering, I find it difficult to tell what lies at the basis of them. If by "time" is meant the entities in time considered collectively, I see no legitimate reason for dissatisfaction. For if these entities, taken individually, are real by the definition of "real," then they are real taken collectively. If by "time," in short, we mean the system of entities in time, then "time," on the definition we are considering, must likewise be real. To be sure, the definition we are considering is a definition that involves an ontology. But in this respect, we shall find,[108] the definition we are considering is like any other definition of reality that is precise and specific. There may, however, be another meaning behind the statement that a definition of reality in terms of time and space presupposes the existence of time and space themselves. By time itself there may be meant a time continuum that is distinct from the system of temporal entities. And if this be the meaning of "time," I can see how the definition as we have it may be—not invalid—but ambiguous. The definition as we have it does not specify whether the continuum, as contrasted with the entities in it, is, or is not, to be called "real." This indeterminateness, however, does not seem to

[106] Platner: *Aphorismen,* Sec. 739, Note.

[107] Marvin: The Existential Proposition; *Journal of Philosophy, etc.,* vol. 8 (1911), p. 490.

[108] *Infra,* page 101.

me to be unavoidable. We need only frame our definition so that it becomes evident that time and space themselves are meant to be called real or that they are meant to be called unreal. Our definition needs only to be made specific on this point; that is to say, it needs to be framed so as to permit only one of these two possible interpretations.

Another ambiguity resulting from the identification of the real with that which is in time and in space is more important. If reality refers to those entities that form one system, to those entities each of which stands in certain spatial and temporal relations to all the other real entities, then there is but one space and one time. But if an entity is called real provided it belong in any sort of space, then there may be more than one space. If our definition is taken in one sense, all entities that do not belong in the one system selected are unreal. But if our definition is taken in the other sense, some of these entities—namely, those that are characterized by a spatial position of some sort—may be real. The distinction is important in dealing with the "ideas" of the so-called epistemological dualist. These "ideas," as sometimes conceived, are not in the one *objective* space, but they are not devoid of all spatial qualities. The house that is my idea is not in objective space; it is not in the spatial system that contains the real house. But it is to the left of a roadway that is also my idea; both the house and the roadway have positions in a subjective space. Consequently, if to be real is to be in *a* space, to have a spatial position of some sort, this house that is my idea may be real. But if only those entities that form a single system of interrelated spatial entities are real, this house that is my idea is unreal.

Kant, too, at times makes location in space and position in time conditions of reality. While time and space are transcendentally ideal, as he puts it, they are empirically real. And every entity that is empirically real—that is to say, real as a phenomenon—must be in time and in space. At least all real objects except thoughts and feelings must be in space. And all real objects without exception must be in time. This condition, that all real objects must be in time and all real objects except thoughts and feelings in space, is given *a priori*. In this respect the situation is

similar to that when reality is defined in terms of intelligible laws that are laid down *a priori*. When that is said to be real which does not violate the law that the quantity of matter is always constant, this conservation of matter cannot be disproved by experience. For any phenomenon that seems to disprove the conservation of matter is thrown out as unreal and disregarded. So here no experience can show that reality is not conditioned upon position in time. For any entity that seems not to be in time is by that very fact to be called unreal. Time and space are given *a priori* as conditions of reality in the sense that, having once been laid down as conditions of reality, no subsequent experience can show that they do not deserve that status. In a sense, of course, Kant does not get them out of his head and lay them down as conditions of reality. He makes several psychological observations such as that we cannot form the image of an entity not in time and space.[109] But unless reality is to be limited to those entities that can be imaged, and this would be a notion of reality entirely distinct from the one we are considering, these psychological observations have nothing to do with the terms "real" and "unreal." If we declare that only those objects of which we can form images are real, we may come out at the same point. We may arrive at the same conclusion, namely, that only entities with a position in time and space are real. But if reality is defined directly in terms of time and space, time and space are *a priori* only because they are laid down as conditions of reality.

Among our contemporaries position in time and location in space are quite frequently made conditions of existence. "Existent processes," says Montague,[110] "are those that occur somewhere, non-existent are those that occur nowhere. The existent is in short that to which the Aristotelian category '*pou*' has a positive application." But there is a tendency not to limit *reality* so precisely. In the "New Realism" we find Montague saying: "The real universe consists of the time-space system of existents together with all that is presupposed by that system."[111] We have, con-

[109] Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, 1st ed., p. 24.

[110] Montague: "Are Mental Processes in Space?"—*Monist*, vol. 18, 1908, p. 21.

[111] The New Realism, p. 255.

sequently, the added task of finding out what these entities in time and space presuppose. It will be remembered that in talking about sense-data, we came upon the thesis that reality includes not only sense-data but all entities that are implied by sense-data. And in the absence of a proposition making the term "implication" meaningful, we found it impossible to distinguish between those entities that are not implied by sense-data and are unreal and those that are implied by sense-data and are real. In the present case we have the same difficulty with the concept "presupposition." Of those entities that are not in time or in space, which are presupposed by the time-space system and which are not? Are extra-spatial ideas, of either the epistemological or the Platonic variety, so presupposed or are they not? In order to decide this question, in order to give the unreal some specific content, we must know what "presupposition" is. "Presupposition" and "implication"—if "implication" is equivalent to it—cannot be left undefined or be defined in terms that assume we already know the meaning of "real" and "unreal."

If reality is defined in terms of time and space we ought to know whether time and space themselves are real. We ought to be told whether an entity in any spatial system is real, or only those entities that belong in one specific spatial system that is pointed out. And if not only entities in time and space but also entities that these spatial and temporal entities presuppose are real, we ought to be told what "presupposition" means. There is one other point upon which we may demand further information. Must an entity to be real be at some definite place in space and time and not vaguely located in all places, or is it only necessary that it be not outside of space and time? For example, "Nature" or the "cosmos" is not outside of space, but neither is it in one place rather than in another. It has what the Scholastics sometimes called "circumscriptive ubeity" but not "definitive ubeity." It remains for us to specify in our definition, consequently, whether entities of this kind may be real or whether only entities with "definitive ubeity" are to be accepted into the chosen circle. When these ambiguities are cleared up, time and space seem to be terms that can very well be used in the definition of reality. For many of the

entities with which we deal will lack the qualities that will have been made conditions of reality. There will be a considerable number of entities that can immediately be seen to be unreal.

The real is that which fits into a determinate order or system of relations; this is the notion of reality we are engaged in bringing out. "Reality," when used in this sense, has to do with a system of interrelated entities, a system where experience is a whole, subject to certain uniformities, held together by manifold interrelations. This interrelatedness of experience, its essential unity, is insisted on pre-eminently by Spinoza. For in his metaphysics all things are related to one another, all have in common their derivation from God. And so we may expect to find in his writings passages in which the term "real" is used to refer to entities that belong to the system of interrelated entities and the term "unreal" to entities outside it. And there is there this notion that the "real" entity is the one that is connected with experience and the unreal or non-existent one the one that is not in accord with the laws of nature, that violates the usual order of things. When we have a definite phenomenon clearly before us, it exists, of course, if its nature is such that it must exist, and it does not exist if its nature is such that it cannot exist. But, leaving aside the help that this pronouncement affords us in determining what entities are real, a clearly comprehended phenomenon is real if it agrees with the order of nature and is not real if it violates that order. "Let us conclude again briefly," says Spinoza, "and see how it need in no wise be feared that fiction will be confused with true ideas. As for the first fiction of which we have spoken, where the thing is clearly conceived, ... we must only take care that its existence be compared with its essence, and that attention is paid at the same time to the order of nature."[112] Here is a notion of reality similar to those we have been investigating. It is not carried out in so much detail as we have found it carried out by others. We have no definite statement of the laws with which a phenomenon must be consistent in order to be real; and we are not told just what sort of consistency with experience is demanded. But none the less "reality,"

[112] Spinoza: On the Emendation of the Intellect, § 65.

or rather "existence," is being used to point to entities that cohere in a system.

That all parts of the universe are connected with one another is a frequently recurring theme in Spinoza. But along with this doctrine there come two quite different notions of reality. One is the notion we have examined, the notion that an entity is real if it forms a *part* of this interconnected whole. The other is the notion that *only* the interconnected whole is real, and that all *parts* are unreal. Both may be said to describe the real as that which is related. For one, "real" means the entity that sustains certain relations and belongs to a system; for the other, "real" means a single object, and that is the whole interrelated system. Indeed, the two senses of "real" do not at all agree; all the individual phenomena that are "real" in the sense that they belong to the system are "unreal" in that they individually do not constitute the system. And whereas, using "real" in one sense, unreality is made up of entities that do not belong to the system, to many of those using "real" in the other sense such unrelated entities appear absolutely inconceivable. There are for them no unrelated entities; those entities that are called "unreal" by those who use "real" in the first of these two senses belong in the system—in their opinion—quite as much as do the entities that these others call "real."

Now, this notion that the whole organic thing called the universe is real and that the unreal is the partial, fragmentary bit of it is well recognized as Spinoza's. "To call anything finite," he says, "is in reality a denial in part, and to call it infinite is the absolute assertion of the existence of its nature."[113] When we are aware of the world in its entirety we are aware of reality; when our attention is limited to a small portion of the universe we are out of contact with reality. "Falsity," reads one of the propositions of the *Ethics,* "consists in privation of knowledge which is involved by inadequate or confused and mutilated ideas."[114] The universe as a related whole is real; its parts are unreal. And the parts that are unreal are the very parts that are real when Spinoza uses "real" in the other sense. Generally speaking, "real" means for him the

[113] Spinoza: Ethics, Book 1, Prop. 8, Note 1.
[114] *Ibid:* Book 2, Prop. 35.

individual that is part of a system, when his attention is on concrete phenomena. And he uses "real" to refer to the system as a whole, when he is dealing with entities at the other end of the scale, with God and the eternal truths. Since, therefore, Spinoza's interest lies so completely in the realm of eternal truths, the term is used much more frequently in this second sense, in the sense, that is, in which it points to the organized whole and not to the parts of that whole.

In Hegel it is the organized whole that is real and not at all the parts of that whole. The fragmentary parts of experience are, indeed, said to have "being"; but there is no attempt, so far as I know, to distinguish between "being" and "non-being" by saying that entities that belong to a system have "being" and that those that do not have "non-being." "Being," that is to say, does not mean those entities that sustain certain relations and "non-being" does not mean those entities that do not sustain such relations. Apparently "being" means sense-data and "non-being" means entities that are not sense-data. Consequently, reality—in the sense of "being"—does not mean the *part* of a related whole. The "real" is not used to mean that which is related in this sense. And so the only sense in which the "real" can mean the related is the sense in which it means the relational whole itself.

It does, however, throughout a large part of Hegel's writings, certainly mean this related, organized whole, this organized whole that may now be called Nature and now the Absolute Idea. This unity "in which all characteristics have coalesced"[115] is *the* real; all more partial and less inclusive entities are to some degree unreal. In this Whole that is real are included entities without "being" as well as those with it; nothing is left out of the Absolute. And so all conceivable entities are part of an interrelated system; none are left out for those to call "unreal" who would use the term to point to entities that are not included in the system of experience.

Among Hegel's English followers "real" again means the organized whole in its entirety. But for some of them it is also used in the sense in which it means the part of this

[115] Hegel: Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences, Part 1 (Logic), § 236.

whole and excludes the entity that is not a part of it. Let us take Joachim as an example. Reality is for him the unified co-ordinated whole, the organized system of experience. "Truth in its essential nature," he says,[116] "is that systematic coherence which is the character of a significant whole." "A 'significant' whole," he adds, "is an organized individual experience, self-fulfilling and self-fulfilled." We do not get an entity that is able to stand on its own legs, and so is self-fulfilling, until we get an entity that is all-inclusive. And so "real" is being used to point to this unique all-inclusive whole. But "real" is also used to point to the individuals that cohere in the system and "unreal" to point to individuals that do not belong in this system. Or at least we can infer that "real" would be so used were Joachim talking about reality instead of about truth. Immediate experiences, for example, are said to be "real," or—as Joachim says (for he is talking about the experiencing of those objects rather than about the objects themselves)—are said to be "true." "Their 'truth' means for us that a whole system of knowledge stands and falls with them, and that in that system they survive."[117] This is like Leibniz's assertion that for the romance of Astræa to be real the whole world would have to be different. The romance of Astræa was unreal because it did not fit in with the system of things that is. It was an unrelated entity and as such called "unreal." So, too, with Joachim it is the unrelated phenomena, the parts that do not fit in, that are "unreal." The immediate experience of the worshipper of Baal is false because "the moral and religious experiences of the past and present reveal themselves, when critically analyzed and reconstructed, as a texture into which *this* immediate intuition can in no sense be woven; they form a system in which *this* would-be truth cannot as such survive." That is to say, the real is that entity that fits into experience, and the phenomenon that he sees who sees Baal hurling thunderbolts is unreal in that it does not accord with experience. The question is not as to whether such an experience is self-fulfilling; it is as to whether it "fits."

[116] Joachin: The Nature of Truth, § 26.
[117] Joachim: The Nature of Truth, § 19.

"Real" consequently is used in both senses, frequently by the same author. It means the individual phenomenon that is part of a co-ordinated interrelated experience; and it means the unified organized whole. A criticism of the first of these two notions would be a repetition of what has gone before. It would reduce itself to the objection that we have yet to be told precisely what sort of relatedness is demanded of real entities. The other notion of reality is a possible definition of the term; though here reality is identified with an entity which, being one "in which all characteristics have coalesced," is necessarily indefinite. What I want to call attention to here, however, is the absolute incompatibility of these two definitions of reality with each other. If "real" means the organized whole, then the parts of that whole are "unreal." Using "real" in one sense, the parts of experience, considered separately, are unreal; using it in the other sense, it is just these parts that are real. We have come upon a contrast that shows the utter lack of uniformity in the use of the term "real," for here are a group of entities that it is being used now to point to, now to exclude. We see the word's utter meaninglessness apart from a definition of it, be it explicit or be it implicit in the context in which the term appears. We see, in short, that we can do nothing with the term "real" before we define it.

CHAPTER V

The Problem of the "Real Centaur," Belief and Existence.

Up to this point we have been moving slowly but we have not encountered any difficulties that have threatened to upset our plans. We have discovered several definitions of reality, painfully detached them one from another, and set them forth one by one. But here it occurs to me that perhaps our whole search is in vain. Perhaps it is impossible to define reality at all, necessary as such a definition is if we are to make any use of the term.

For, suppose that I am thinking of a centaur or a mountain of gold. These objects are fictions, objects of the imagination if you will, but they are none the less objects of my consciousness. Let me now suppose that the entities of which I am thinking have in addition the quality "existence" or "reality." I am thinking of an existing centaur; the object with which my consciousness is toying is a real mountain of gold. It is these existing centaurs and real golden mountains that make us pause. It is they that can lead us to think that perhaps the definitions we seek are, from the nature of the case, impossible. For they bring us face to face with a difficulty that is extremely hard to overcome.

Among the subsistents, the objects that may be subsumed under the all-inclusive category of "being," we find such entities as existing centaurs and real golden mountains. Apparently these entities belong in the class of real beings, since they are in their definition explicitly given reality as a quality. And yet if they are considered real, reality becomes quite an unwieldly domain. Any object becomes real that has this quality added to the concept of it. A Pegasus[118] becomes real provided that it is called a real Pegasus; an island floating in the Atlantic becomes real provided it is

[118] Gassendi: The Fifth Set of Objections to Descartes' "Meditations"; See, also, the discussion of the "existing lion" in the First Set of Objections, by Caterus; Descartes: *Oeuvres*, ed. by Adam and Tannery, vol. 9, p. 79.

thought of as a perfect island and hence as a real island.[119] The category of reality, if less inclusive than the category of being, becomes quite as heterogeneous and unwieldly.

And so we must exclude the real centaurs and real winged horses and real golden mountains from existence. We must exclude them, that is to say, if reality is not to be as incoherent and unlimited as being itself. This exclusion is usually brought about by saying that reality is not a predicate at all. So say Gaunilon, and Gassendi, and, most influential of all, Immanuel Kant.[120] We can make our centaur that is merely a concept anything that we desire except that we cannot make it real. We can make our horse winged, we can make fire come out of his nostrils, we can make him roar like a lion; but we cannot make him a real horse. Existence, in short, is not a quality that can be *attributed* to the object of my thought. We think merely of the entity; its existence is no proper part of the concept of it. A hundred real thalers contain not a penny more than a hundred thalers that are merely imagined. What we can have as objects of thought are merely centaurs or thalers. They are not to be described as real centaurs or imaginary centaurs or real thalers or imaginary thalers. And consequently we avoid the problem of the real centaur by denying that such a combination of terms is an object of thought at all.

But if existence is no attribute of the entities of which I am conscious, I can never talk about existence at all. The only entities about which I can think are entities that are in some sense objects of my consciousness. Consequently, if existence is never a part of them, I am cut off from all commerce with existence. If what I think about are merely centaurs and thalers, essences that never carry within themselves either existence or a reference to existence, then existence is something entirely foreign and meaningless. If none of the objects of my thought can breathe a word about existence, there is no way in which I can come to distinguish between the existent and the merely subsistent. Accordingly, existence must in some way be given in some of the objects of my thought. That is, some

[119] Gaunilon: In Behalf of the Fool, sec. 6.

[120] Kant: Critique of Pure Reason, 1st ed., p. 597, et seq.

of these essences must contain within themselves as objects of thought either existence or reference to existence. They cannot be subsistents pure and simple that breathe no word about existence. On the other hand, this existence or this reference to existence cannot be given in them at will. For in that case we have these real centaurs and real golden mountains that are real merely because reality or a reference to reality is put into the concept of them. Reality or reference to reality must be given in some concepts, but it cannot be given in any of them to which we please to attribute such a predicate.

Here is where the difficulty arises when we attempt to define reality. For, suppose that we define the real as the permanent. Then, since permanence is equivalent to reality, the status of permanence is the same as the status of reality. Permanence, too, must be a predicate of some entities but not of any entity to which we please to attribute it. On the one hand, permanence or a reference to permanence must be given as a quality of some of the objects of my thought. Permanence, like reality, must be conceivable; it must have meaning. But on the other hand, we cannot allow permanence to be made a quality of any entity that we please to call permanent. For in that case, as soon as I conceive permanent centaurs or permanent golden mountains, such centaurs and golden mountains are real forthwith. It is not enough, consequently, to take the category of being or subsistence and then restrict ourselves to those subsistents that are conceived to be permanent. For any subsistent will be conceived to be permanent if we put permanence into the concept of it. No matter what the quality be in terms of which we choose to define reality, we face the same difficulty. Any entity can be conceived to be independent, to be a sense-datum, to be a member of a system of interrelated entities. So long as we restrict ourselves merely to all entities that *pretend* to have one quality or another, the real world we mark out will suffer from instability. It will be a world that can be populated at pleasure. Reality, accordingly, cannot be defined in terms of a quality that can be made a quality of *any* entity. And yet any quality that we may select will apparently be one that can be attributed to any entity to which we please to

attribute it. "Any character you please may be imagined and may remain merely imaginary."[121] Entities that *seem* to be permanent, or that *pretend* to be independent, or that may be *conceived* to be sense-data, are legion.

And so reality must consist of entities that are *really* permanent, or *really* independent or *really* sense data. If reality is defined in terms of permanence, real entities are those to which permanence *belongs,* not those that seem to be permanent. Of the entities that *seem* to be permanent, some, we must say, *are* permanent and real and some are not. A centaur or a golden mountain may be *conceived* to be permanent; whether it *is* permanent and real is another matter. The whole case is thrown open once more. For in order to determine the content of reality we must now distinguish between the seeming permanent and the really permanent, between that which is merely conceived as permanent and that to which permanence belongs. How, now, are we to answer this new question? How are we to tell with which entities permanence belongs and with which it does not? If we define the really permanent as that which in addition to the quality permanence has the quality Q and the seeming permanent as that which lacks the quality Q, we only postpone the question. For the quality Q can be added to the concept of any entity; we consequently must undertake to distinguish the entities to which the quality Q belongs from those to which it does not belong. We are caught in an infinite regress. For no criterion will be able to rule out those entities that merely pretend to satisfy it. And so it seems impossible ever to mark out the real from the merely subsistent, from the entities that are merely objects of thought, a conclusion that is fatal not only to this dissertation but to all science as well.

There is a first step that must be taken if this outcome is to be avoided. We must refuse to treat the concepts "real" and "unreal" in the same way. While not everything that is conceived to be real is real, we must grant that everything that is conceived to be unreal is unreal. My real centaur is not real because I think of it as real. But a desk that I think as unreal is by that very fact unreal. This does not mean that the desk before me ceases to be a real

[121] W. H. Sheldon: The Demolition of Unreality; *Journal of Philosophy, etc.,* vol. 13, 1916, p. 319.

desk when I form the concept of an unreal desk before me. In this case there are two desks to be considered, one without the predicate "unreal" and one with it. And of these two subsistents, only the one conceived with the predicate "unreal" is necessarily "merely" a subsistent or "merely" an object of thought. When that which is in question is the predicate "real," the situation is not similar. Here too we may consider two entities, one centaur conceived without the predicate "real" and one conceived with it. But in this case not even the centaur conceived with this predicate is necessarily real.

All entities conceived as unreal, then, *are* unreal. If, consequently, reality is defined as permanence, all entities that appear to be impermanent are unreal. Similarly, if reality is defined as independence, all entities that pretend to be dependent are unreal. If, then, a definition of reality does nothing else, it does rule out a certain class of entities as "unreal." This service, we must admit, is of considerable importance. For it becomes possible as a result to determine the status of a large number of important entities. If to be real means to be present to the senses, then the Platonic Ideas that are conceived as not present to the senses are unreal. And the greater the number of qualities than an entity must have if it is to be real, the greater will be the number of entities that can definitely be classified as unreal. If an entity to be real must have the qualities A, B and C, any entity that pretends to be not A or not B or not C will be unreal. Just which entities are those that pretend to be not A or not B or not C will depend on how reality is defined. On this account it is necessary to make explicit the various definitions of reality. For each of these definitions determines in a different fashion the content, or, rather, part of the content, of the unreal.

If we define the real as the permanent, our definition determines part of the content of the unreal. For then entities that do not pretend to be permanent, entities that mean to be evanescent, are unreal. A similar result is accomplished when we define the real as that which is related, when we define it as that which is a sense-datum, when we define it as that which is independent. In one case an entity that does not mean to be a sense-datum will be unreal, in another case an entity that does not mean to be independent will be

unreal. Yet one definition will mark out a larger number of entities as unreal than will another. If we say that an entity to be real must be a vivid object of sense-perception, then a number of entities are immediately known to be unreal. For there are a number of entities that are never held to be vivid objects of sense-perception. If, however, we define the real as the independent, we are still ignorant of any large group of entities that are obviously unreal. For there are not many entities that do not pretend to be independent of a percipient. It is useless to define reality in terms of independence because such a definition does not separate out any important group of entities as obviously unreal. And the fault that is here found with a definition of reality in terms of independence is the fault that in the preceding chapters has been found with many other definitions of reality. It is useless to say merely that the real is that which is "connected" with a perception, for unless we know the specific character of the connection demanded, no entity will come to us as obviously lacking in the connection that is required and so no entity will come to us as obviously unreal. We have in the preceding chapters objected to certain definitions of reality in that they do not thus determine part of the content of the unreal. The problem that has been raised in the present chapter, however, applies equally to all of the definitions that we have considered. For while some of them determine quite definitely part of the content of the unreal, none of them can determine with any definiteness the content of the real.

A rather precise definition of reality will mark out certain entities as obviously unreal. But when all is said and done, we are apparently left with an irresolvable element, a surd, in the concept of reality. No matter how many qualities we require an entity to show in order for it to be called "real," and no matter how precisely we describe these qualities in terms of which we are defining reality, our goal is still some distance away from us. For after all we have only succeeded in demanding of the candidate for reality that it *pretend* to be A, and *pretend* to be B, and *pretend* to be C. But if reality is to be kept free of real centaurs and real golden mountains, it must be only some of these entities that pretend to be A and B and C that are real. If the content of reality is not to be added to at will,

no number of limitations imposed on subsistence will be sufficient to mark out the real. For, as we have seen, no matter how many requirements we make, the number of entities that can be thought to fulfill all these conditions will be legion. Our purpose is to mark out the real. We shall not succeed in our purpose by adding one more quality, possession of which is to be made a requisite for reality. On the other hand, if we leave the matter where it stands, we cannot tell concerning the entities we have not yet definitely labelled "unreal" which are to be called "real" and which are to be called "unreal." We have separated out a class of unreal entities, but what we have left contains both real and unreal entities. My centaur pretends to be permanent and a sense-datum and independent and a member of a system of interrelated entities. Your desk makes the same pretensions. What reason, now, can we find for calling your desk real and my centaur unreal? And how am I to know when I am confronted by ether or phlogiston that also makes the same pretensions whether it is to be called real or unreal? One way out, theoretically, at least, is to start with all of those subsistents not previously excluded, and to enumerate those that are real and those that are unreal. Such a remedy, however, is just as fatal as none at all. We get started on the road to knowledge only to come to the end of the road at the same moment. Just as the concept "reality" becomes meaningful, it becomes useless, for we already know which entities are real and which are unreal.

We must know what it means to be real; otherwise the process by which we call some entities real and others unreal is without rhyme or reason. Besides, reality must be defined in general terms, in terms of a criterion that has yet to be applied. And yet such a definition seems impossible on account of the real centaurs and real golden mountains that, it would seem, cannot be got rid of. Evidently reality cannot be serviceably defined in terms merely of some objective quality such as permanence or independence. Let us, consequently, have recourse to the concept: "belief." If we say that an entity to be real must not only be conceived to have the qualities A, B and C, but that this entity so conceived must be believed by me, perhaps then we shall have found a solution. Suppose I define the real as that

which when conceived as a sense-datum is believed by me. Let us see what happens in this case to the real centaurs and real golden mountains. We may take, as an example of an entity that is conceived to be a sense-datum, a ghost that I pretend is before me. If, now, all entities that are conceived to be sense-data are real, this ghost is real. But we have revised our definition; only those entities are real that when conceived as sense-data are entities in which I believe. And so I think of a ghost that pretends to be a sense-datum in which I believe. But as soon as I consider this ghost, I am aware that I am considering a ghost that seems not to be an entity in which I believe. This entity that is an object of my thought is given as a sense-datum in which I believe, and at the same time is given as a sense-datum in which I do not believe. But since it is given as a sense-datum in which I do not believe, it is unreal. For only those entities are real that can be given as entities in which I believe without being given at the same time with the contradictory quality.

I hope that in this way I have avoided the real centaurs and real golden mountains. An entity to be real, we have said, must be given with the quality A, and must not at the same time be given with the contradictory quality non-A. If, now, the quality A in terms of which we define reality is some objective quality such as relatedness or permanence, we have no way in which to eliminate the real centaurs and real golden mountains. For we can have before us a related centaur or a permanent golden mountain without at the same time having before us a centaur that is not related or a golden mountain that is not permanent. I do not necessarily think of a golden mountain that is evanescent at the same time that I think of a golden mountain that is permanent. And so a golden mountain that is merely thought of as permanent will be real provided that reality is defined in terms of permanence alone. When, however, we make belief a condition of existence, the status of the golden mountain is quite different. For at the same time that I think of a golden mountain in which I believe, I think of a golden mountain in which I do not believe. At the same time that the golden mountain is given with the quality A, it is given with the contradictory quality non-A. And so, with reality defined partly in terms of

belief, the real world cannot be populated at will. An entity does not become real merely because I pretend that it is an object in which I believe. For certain entities in which I pretend that I believe are at the same time given to me as entities in which I do not believe. These entities that are given with the quality A are at the same time given with the contradictory quality non-A; and so they are entities that are forthwith unreal.

We seem to eliminate the real centaurs and real golden mountains, it may be admitted, when we introduce the concept of belief into our definition of existence. But, it may be said, our apparent success is due to the fact that the concept "belief" is subsequent to the concept "existence." To believe in an entity, it may be said, is to believe in the *existence* of that entity. The entity in which I believe is the entity in whose *existence* I believe. Consequently, when we talk about belief, it may be held, we illicitly presuppose a knowledge of the meaning of "existence." To define reality in terms of belief, in short, is to define reality in terms of a concept that presupposes "reality." It is, it may be held, a circular definition, one that implicitly makes use of the very term that is to be defined.

Yet it is not, I think, in the nature of things that "existence" is prior to "belief." According to representative psychologists, belief is for the naive man the natural and normal condition. Only after certain disconcerting experiences does he come to doubt the entities that are given to him and to question their existence. Normally the feeling or state of belief precedes the raising of any questions about existence. The term "belief," it would thus seem, may be used to point to a simple and non-cognitive psychological condition, a psychological condition that does not imply any cognitive distinguishing between unreality and reality. When certain objects are presented to us, we are characterized by this feeling or state of belief. And there is this belief, it may be said, whether there is any consciousness of existence or not. Belief may thus be described without any presupposing of existence. It may be described as a psychological condition that is to be distinguished by its intrinsic psychological characteristics. "Belief," in one sense, may be defined in terms of existence, in terms of the entity to which it refers. But "belief," in what is perhaps a different

sense of the word, may be described in terms of its psychological characteristics. And it is a "belief" to be described in this latter manner that we are meaning to use. "Belief," as we use it, is not a concept that presupposes existence. And so to define existence in terms of such a belief is not to give a circular definition of the term that is to be defined. By "an entity in which I believe" I do not mean an entity in whose *existence* I believe. By "an entity in which I believe" I mean an entity such that in being conscious of it I am characterized by a specific psychological condition called "belief."

When belief is described in such psychological terms, the connection between "belief" and "existence" is still to be determined. "Existence" is a term that has not yet been brought upon the stage. And when it is brought upon the stage, it is a predicate that may be given to objects in which I do not believe as well as it may be given to objects in which I do believe. "Belief" has not been defined in terms of "reality," and so "entity in which I believe" does not imply "real entity." "Belief" is one term and "existence" is another. And so an entity in which I believe need not exist unless either "belief" is defined in terms of "existence" or "existence" is defined in terms of "belief."

When Descartes attempted to doubt every entity that was presented to him, he found that there was one entity in which he could not but believe. His own doubting, his own mental functioning, was something that he found he could not doubt, something in which he could not help but believe. Here was an entity that was perforce an object of belief. Yet if belief is understood to be a purely psychological condition, if belief is understood to be something that is to be described by its intrinsic qualities, then an entity that is necessarily an object of belief is not *ipso facto* an entity that is real. If belief is not described in terms of existence, then an entity in which I must believe is not necessarily a real entity. "Reality" is in such a case a concept that has yet to be introduced. And when it is subsequently introduced, it need not be given as a predicate to these entities in which I cannot but believe. Descartes does, to be sure, pass from "entity in which I cannot but believe" to "entity that is real." Because he can not doubt his own thinking, he concludes

that that thinking must be real. Such a transition, it seems to me, is implicitly a definition of reality. It implies a definition of reality to the effect that entities that cannot be doubted must be real. It is not a transition to which in the nature of things we must agree. It is a transition that is valid only when existence is defined in terms of belief, or belief in terms of existence.

A definition wholly in terms of belief is not the only possible definition of existence. Entities that cannot be doubted are not entities that we must perforce call "real." And yet a definition that makes some use of the concept "belief" is, we have found, necessary, if we are to avoid the real centaurs and real golden mountains. Only by having recourse to "belief" can we eliminate these troublesome entities. They cannot be eliminated if we define reality merely in terms of the objective qualities—A, B and C. Of the entities given with the objective qualities A, B and C, only those are real, we must say, that are entities in which I believe. We must make some use of belief, though we may at the same time define reality partly in terms of the objective qualities A, B and C.

Accordingly, of the entities that are conceived with the qualities A, B and C, those, we shall say, are real that are entities in which I believe. Now such a definition as this will do very well so long as I think of objects merely as objects of my thought. Suppose, however, a second individual is doing the thinking. Then when he thinks of a ghost present to his senses that pretends to be an entity in which he believes, he will at the same time be thinking of a ghost that seems not to be an entity in which he believes. In order that the real centaur shall not be admitted among the objects of his thought, the real for him must be defined as that which, when conceived with the qualities A, B and C, is an entity in which *he* believes. But the entities conceived with the qualities A, B and C, in which *he* believes are different from the entities so conceived in which *I* believe. Consequently, the content of reality varies with the individual who is doing the thinking. That is to say, the content of reality is relative. For there is one group of entities that are real for me and another group of entities that are real for you.

It is of course not a new thing for "real" to be used in such a way that the content of reality must vary with the

individual who is doing the thinking. The term is said to have been used in just this way by Protagoras.[122] And it has been used in just this way by James and some of his followers.[123] Now it has been said that the real is that which appears, that which is believed. Now it has been said that it is that which is interesting. But that which appears to one man is different from that which appears to another. That which is believed by me is different from that which is believed by you. And that which is uninteresting to-day was interesting yesterday. With such definitions of reality, consequently, to know whether an entity is real, we must know whose thought, and what instant of that thought, is in question. Now in so far as they put a certain amount of relativity into the concept of reality, I believe definitions of this sort to be correct. Reality, it seems to me, must be relative to the individual whose thought is under consideration if the real centaur is to be avoided.

When, however, we define reality in such a way that it is relative to the thinker, we encounter a serious disadvantage. Let us suppose, for example, that we define the real simply as that which is believed. Then, as we have seen, the entities that are real for me are quite different from those that are real for you. All sorts of entities are real for some one or other. Consequently, to call an entity "real" is to assert almost nothing about it; it is to assert merely that it belongs in the large and ill-assorted group of entities that are believed to have been believed by some one. We might, however, be willing to allow the term "real" to become vague and meaningless, if the term "real for me" could be substituted for it. But the latter can not be substituted for it without doing great violence to common speech. For when I say that the earth moves, I am asserting that the earth's motion is real absolutely, not that it is real for me. And so with all of the propositions that can be transformed into existential propositions. In all of them we are predicating a quality that is meant not to be relative to the individual making the judgment.

Consequently it seems wise to keep within as narrow bounds as possible the relativity of reality. We can not keep out the real centaurs and at the same time prevent the

[122] Plato: Theaetetus, 168–170.

[123] James: Principles of Psychology (1890), Vol. 2, Ch. 21.

concept from being to some extent relative to the thinker. But we need not go the whole way. There is, as we have seen, a surd element in the concept of reality, and to deal with this we must have a recourse to "belief." But it is not necessary to treat the entire concept as a surd. And it is unwise to do so in view of the prevalent usage to the contrary. If the whole meaning of "real" is dependent upon the individuality of the thinker, "real" becomes quite meaningless. But if the surd element is reduced to a minimum, there is only a relatively small sphere within which the meaning of the term is undetermined. It is to reduce this surd element that we must use some objective qualities, such as permanence or independence, in the definition of reality. For the only meaning the term gets, it gets from the place these qualities occupy in the definition of it. If reality is to be meaningful, consequently, we must define it not merely in terms of belief but in terms of certain qualities A, B and C. The real must be that which is conceived to have the qualities A, B and C, and at the same time is believed. The latter requirement we can not avoid; the former we neglect at the peril of leaving our concept void of meaning.

The unreal must be defined, then, I think, as that which appears not to be believed by me when conceived with the qualities A, B and C. And of the remaining entities those are real which appear to be believed by me when conceived with the qualities A, B and C. This form, that I believe the definition of reality must take, is rather cumbersome. And perhaps its very cumbersomeness enables me to hope that the real centaurs and real golden mountains have been avoided. I think, however, that with this formula these entities have truly been avoided. And I see no other way in which they can be escaped and knowledge made possible.

The real, then, is not that which is conceived to have the quality A, but that to which the quality A belongs. And that to which the quality A belongs is that which, when conceived with the quality A, is believed. When, consequently, in the preceding pages the real has been said to be equivalent to that which is permanent or that which is a sense-datum, we can not hold this to mean that the real is equivalent to that which is conceived to be permanent or conceived to be a sense-datum. At least we can

not hold this if we are anxious to find definitions that will not allow reality to be added to at will. We must hold these definitions to mean that the real is that to which permanence belongs or that which is really a sense-datum. And that which is really a sense-datum is that which, when conceived as a sense-datum, is believed. It is only by some such transformation as this that the surd element in the definition of reality can be explained. Any definition of reality, it seems to me, must be modified in some such way as this if the "real centaur" is to be avoided. Consequently, when in the preceding pages I have said that the real may be defined as that to which permanence belongs, I have meant that it is possible to define the real as that entity which is an object of belief when it is conceived to be permanent.

The real, then, is that which is believed by me when it is conceived to have the qualities A, B and C, and is not at the same time disbelieved by me. This form an acceptable definition of reality must take. But the qualities that are to be written in where I have put the symbols A and B and C are not determined. For A and B and C we may read "permanence" or "independence" or "presence in sense-perception," or the like. When, consequently, I have said that it is possible to define the real as the permanent, I have meant that it is possible to put "permanence" where I have put these symbols. There are a great variety of qualities that may be used to take the place of these symbols A, B and C; but some qualities may be said to belong to real entities much more meaningfully than may others. Some qualities, that is to say, can be used more successfully than others to fill in these blanks represented by the letters A, B and C. For some qualities, while apparently they fill in these blanks, are in reality quite as meaningless as the letters whose places they are taking. If we are told, for example, that a real entity is one that is a member of a system of interrelated entities and are not told what constitutes this relatedness, we are quite as much in the dark as if we are told that a real entity is one that has the quality A. A quality that is to be used as a substitute for these symbols must be meaningful and specific; it must not be a quality such that when it is attributed to an entity we feel the entity to be no more specifically described than it was before.

CHAPTER VI

The Author's Definition of "Existence" and "Reality"

The historical inquiries we have made have shown what a large measure of disagreement there is as to the meaning of the terms "existence" and "reality." Now only sense-data are said to exist, now only entities that are not sense-data are said to exist. Now only entities that have a position in time are called real, now only entities that are out of time are called real. "Existence" and "reality" have been defined in terms of permanence, in terms of time and space, in terms of a system of interrelated entities, in terms of activity, in terms of belief. The entities that are real if the term is used in one sense are unreal if the term is used in another sense. And if we have recourse to the meaning of the term as it is used in common speech, either we can not find out what that meaning is or we find a meaning different from any of those already discovered. Wherever we look we merely add to the variety of meanings before us. We find ourselves in the end confronted by a whole host of meanings the term *has* had, no one of which stands out as *the* meaning the term ought to have.

And yet in any one writer, or at least in any one context, there must be some one sense of "existence" that is being used. For there are sure to be propositions laid down there that are equivalent to propositions asserting existence or non-existence. And these propositions are meaningful only if existence has there some specific definite meaning. Existence can not be used in such a way that we are left in doubt as to which of these various and contradictory senses is intended. It must be used in one definite sense and not used vaguely. Each writer, that is to say, must be clear as to which meaning the term "existence" has for him. The question can not be left undetermined if propositions with an existential import are to be significant.

In view of the great variety of meanings the term has had, however, there will be something arbitrary about this

process of selection. Whichever sense of the term we choose to use, there will be other senses of the term that we might have chosen. There will always be some one for whom "existence" does not mean what it means for us. And whichever sense of the term we choose to use, there will always, I think, be some particulars in which the denotation of the term as we use it will not be identical with the denotation of the term as it is used in common speech. There will always be some entities that we shall be calling "real" that in ordinary parlance are called "unreal," or some entities that we shall be calling "unreal" that in ordinary parlance are called "real." The meaning "existence" will have will be the meaning it has for us, not the meaning the word has for all philosophers nor the meaning it has in ordinary language. And what is true of the term "existence" is true of the term "reality." The sense in which we use the term "reality" will show what *we* mean by "reality" and not what "reality" *must* mean. We may choose to define "existence" in one set of terms and "reality" in another set of terms. Or we may choose to call "existence" and "reality" synonymous. But however we define "existence" and however we define "reality," whether we define the two terms in the same way or in different ways, our definitions of both terms will be arbitrary. They will show what "existence" means for us and what "reality" means for us and not what "existence" and "reality" mean for the world.

When we have once decided what "existence" means, we shall have decided what entities are to be called existent entities. A definition of existence, in other words, will have determined the content of the world of existence. Consequently, if the definition of existence must be arbitrary, the content of the world of existent entities must be arbitrary. There will be one group of entities that exists in the sense of the term that I am employing, another group that exists in the sense in which some one else understands that term, and still another group that exists as existence is used in our ordinary speech. And so with reality. Just which entities constitute the real world depends on the meaning that is given the term "real." And since the meaning given "real" must be a result of an act of choice,

the content of the real world will be the result of an act of choice. In one sense, consequently, we *make* the real world. For the content of that world depends on a choice of ours. We may not make the world in the way in which the Ego is conceived by Fichte to make the world, but we do make the world in this other sense. Indeed, we must make the real world if there is to be any real world at all; otherwise the concept of a "real world" is vague and meaningless.

Any definition of "reality" or "existence" must, accordingly, involve an ontology. It must determine in an arbitrary fashion the content of reality or of existence. This, however, is just what is denied by Marvin. He asks: "How ought we, then, to define the word 'to exist?'" And he replies: "With the minimum of ontological assumption; for the definition of existence ought not itself to be an ontology."[124] But, natural as the desire is to maintain a judicial impartiality when we define existence, the facts will not allow us to entertain such hopes. We cannot prevent the definition of existence from involving an ontology. For in whichever sense we choose to use the term "existence," we are selecting and constructing the content of existence so as to exclude some entities that have been said to exist. We cannot define the term in such a way that all of the senses in which the term has been used will be found acceptable. And to define it in such a way that nothing is told us respecting the content of existence is to give no definition at all. No other alternative exists. Consequently, any definition that *is* a definition will involve an ontology. Marvin's own definition is of the kind that in the third chapter of this essay has been attributed to Hume and to Kant. The entities that exist are those that are observed and those that are connected with entities that are observed. In other words, sense-data and entities connected with sense-data exist. If, however, the meaning of "connection" is left undetermined, we cannot distinguish the entities that are connected with sense-data from those that are not, and so we have really a definition far from precise. If, on the other hand, the meaning of "connection" is rendered definite, as it is, for example, when Marvin suggests that entities that enable us to predict observed facts are connected

[124] Marvin: The Existential Proposition; *Journal of Philosophy, etc.*, vol. 8 (1911), p. 477.

with them, then our definition of existence is selective. For we are ruling out of existence such entities as things-in-themselves, entities that cannot be said to enable us to predict observed facts. We are determining the content of existence so as to exclude these entities that have often been said to exist. We are laying down a definition of existence that involves an ontology.

A definition of "reality" must be arbitrary. But it does not follow that a definition of reality is an absurdity. Let us agree that none of the qualities in terms of which reality may be defined "has any *intrinsic* connection with Being."[125] None the less it is possible to connect them with being or subsistence so as to form a meaningful and stable combination. The connection will be merely "extrinsic," yet we shall have a combination that is equivalent to "reality" in the usage of some individual. And if we mean by a definition a statement that gives the meaning a term has at some time had, it will be a definition. Indeed, in spite of the fact that a definition of existence means the abandonment of an impartial attitude, "existence" must be defined if it is to be a meaningful term. The definition of "existence" I am about to give will explain only what "existence" means for me and not what "existence" means for all men. But it will cause "existence" to be a term with a specific and definite meaning when it appears in my writings. And to the extent to which my definition is specific and unambiguous, it will enable one to tell just which entities exist and just which ones do not exist, as I am using that term.

For me "existence" and "reality" are synonymous. The entities that exist are just those that are real. When I am defining "existence," consequently, I am at the same time defining reality. Now, an entity to be real and existent, as I choose to use these terms, must be in time and space. That is to say, I accept the view that only entities in time and in space are real. We have seen, however, that when reality is defined in terms of time and space, several ambiguities remain to be cleared up. Let me therefore make my definition more specific. Let me say that an entity to

[125] W. H. Sheldon: The Demolition of Unreality; *Journal of Philosophy, etc.*, vol. 13 (1916), p. 320.

be real must have some rather definite position in time and in space; it cannot be vaguely located in all time and in all space. That is, it must have definitive ubeity and not circumscriptive ubeity. Time and space themselves I shall not call real; I shall restrict the term to the entities that are *in* time and *in* space. Consequently, the time-space continuum, apart from the entities that are located in it, is unreal. There was one other ambiguity that we found in the view that entities in time and in space are real. We have still to be told whether the reference is to entities with a location in some space or to entities with a location in the one objective space. It is the latter position that I shall take. When I say that an entity to be real must be in time and in space, I mean that it must be in the one spatio-temporal system to which we usually refer. I shall not call entities "real" that are in any space and in any time; they must be in the one space and time that is conceived to be objective and not in some space and time that is conceived to be subjective.

An entity to be real, then, must be in time and in space. Furthermore, an entity to be real and existent must be conceived to be one such that more of the subjects having it as object of consciousness believe it than disbelieve it. Let us suppose that ten people have an object called to their attention and that five of them feel neither belief nor disbelief with respect to it. Then, if three of the others believe the object under consideration while two of them reject it, the object, provided it satisfies the other conditions of existence, is a real object. If an object does not pretend to have this quality, it is unreal. When I think of phlogiston, I am thinking of an entity that seems to be rejected by the majority of individuals who think of it. So, too, with the second chair that I see when I press the corner of my eyeball. This chair is conceived as a chair that is not generally an object of belief. Consequently this chair is immediately to be dubbed "unreal."

To be real, then, an entity must be in time and in space and it must be an entity such that of the subjects having it as object of consciousness more believe it than disbelieve it. Undoubtedly much remains to be said before the meaning of these requirements becomes clear and unambiguous;

and besides, there is a third requirement that I shall add later in this chapter when I come to consider the notion of independence. But for the present let me assume that these are the sufficient conditions of "reality" and "existence," as I choose to use these terms. Let me assume, that is, not only that entities must be conceived with these qualities to be real, but also that all entities to which these qualities *belong* are real.

We must now be careful to avoid the existing centaurs and real golden mountains. It cannot be all entities that are *conceived* to be entities such that more of the subjects having them as objects of consciousness believe them than disbelieve them and that are *conceived* to be in time and space that are real. For a centaur and a golden mountain may be conceived with these qualities. Any entity may be thought of along with these qualities, and so, if reality were defined in this manner, the real world could be populated at will. No, a real entity is one to which position in time and space *belongs,* and one that is *really* an entity such that more of the subjects having it as object of consciousness believe it than disbelieve it. But to what entities does a position in time and space *belong?* The only way by which we have been able to determine to what entities the quality A "belongs" is by having recourse to "belief." The quality A "belongs" to an entity when this entity, being conceived with the quality A, is an entity in which I believe. Consequently, those entities belong in time and space in which I believe when they are conceived to be in time and space. And so a real entity, as I am using the term "real," is an entity that (1) is conceived to have a position in time and space, and (2) is conceived to be an entity such that more of the subjects having it as object of consciousness believe it than disbelieve it, and (3) is an entity in which I believe. Entities in which I do not believe when they are conceived with these qualities are unreal. Those remaining entities, that when so conceived *are* entities in which I believe, are real; and they alone are real.

It is in this sense that I choose to use the terms "reality" and "existence." When I use them in this sense there will be many entities that I shall be calling "real" that others have called "unreal," and *vice versa.* I shall call the other side of the moon real, though it is called unreal by one who

defines reality in terms of actual—and not possible—sense-data. And I shall call Platonic Ideas when conceived as supra-spatial unreal, notwithstanding the fact that they are called real when "real" means "intelligible." It is also probably true that some entities are real in my sense of the word that are not usually called real in ordinary parlance. Some violation of ordinary usage seems necessary, however we define "existence" and "reality." For in common speech these terms are applied very loosely and unsystematically; consequently, a systematic and precise definition will mark out a group of entities that cannot help but be different in some particulars from that group of entities ordinarily called "real" or "existent."

My definition, in short, only gives the meaning "existence" and "reality" have for me. Relativity of this kind, however, I do not think objectionable. For it is quite different from the sort of relativity that is introduced in so far as reality is defined in terms of belief. Let me show this by comparing the two concepts "my native land" and "the thinker's native land." "My native land" is relative to me in that one must know something about me to know which my native land is. But having once determined that I was born in the United States, my native land does not depend on who it is that is doing the thinking. Whether a Venezuelan or a Hottentot be doing the thinking, "my native land" is still the United States. But "the thinker's native land" does vary. There is this difference, I think, between defining the real as that which is believed and giving it a definition that is the definition I choose to give it. For when it has once been decided what meaning I choose to give "reality," the question whether an entity is to be called "real" is one that can be decided on objective grounds.

It is impossible, then, to find a definition of "reality" that will make acceptable all of the senses in which the term has been used. Any definition that we hit upon will, consequently, be arbitrary. That is, it will conflict with some meaning that has been given the term by metaphysicians or with the usage of common sense, inchoate as that is. It will not state the meaning that the term "existence" has for all of us; it will state the meaning the term has for the individual who lays this definition down and accepts it.

Yet there will be compensations for its lack of objectivity. For if it is really a definition, a proposition that enables us to pick out those objects that are to be named real and those that are to be named unreal, it will be a touchstone that will permit us to settle some of the problems that have been troubling philosophy for centuries.

Let me first consider those entities that are not objects of our perception, but which stand behind those objects and may be said to correspond to them. As contrasted with the objects of perception they are the things-in-themselves. I do not see or feel or touch them, but the objects I do see and feel and touch stand in a certain correspondence with them. At times these trans-experiential entities are conceived to be in time and in space; at other times they are in time but not in space; at other times they are noumena both non-temporal and non-spatial. But, however conceived, these things-in-themselves have had their existence questioned. Now it has been asserted that there *are* such things as things-in-themselves, now that such alleged entities do not really exist. How are these contradictory assertions to be judged? Why, obviously, the ontological status of these entities depends on the meaning of "existence." If to exist means to be an object of sense-perception, of course things-in-themselves do not exist. If "to exist" means to have a place in the time-space continuum, then things-in-themselves when conceived as non-temporal and non-spatial again do not exist. If, on the other hand, "existence" is being used in the sense in which it points to active entities, or to the causes of sense-perception, things-in-themselves may very well be real. We must know in what sense existence is being used before we can intelligently judge whether things-in-themselves exist. And when we do once know what sort of existence is in question, the reality or unreality of these trans-experiential entities should be thereby in large part determined. It may not be entirely determined, for, firstly, the sense in which "existence" is being used may be a rather vague sense, one that does not specify with any definiteness just what class of entities it denotes, or, secondly, we may not know just what is meant by things-in-themselves, and so may not be sure that such entities have the qualities that have been asserted by definition to be the qualities of existent things.

An example of each will no doubt make these two remaining sources of confusion clearer. If "existence" is defined so as to include sense-data and entities that sense-data imply, we are still left in doubt as to the status of things-in-themselves, for we do not know whether the relation of these entities to sense-data is of the kind that the definition vaguely calls "implication." Or if "existence" means location in time and space, we cannot tell whether trans-experiential entities exist until we know whether the trans-experiential entities whose existence is in question are conceived as outside of time and space or not. But while the determination of the meaning of "existence" is not the sole requirement for the solution of the problem as to the existence of things-in-themselves, it is an absolutely essential requirement, though one that, so far as I know, is never taken into consideration.

So much for things-in-themselves. Another group of entities that have offered considerable trouble are the entities in the past and present and future that are not objects of sense-perception and not the things-in-themselves behind the objects of sense-perception. Julius Caesar, King Arthur and the Knights of his Round Table, all the roses that blush unseen, the events that will occur and those that it is alleged will occur in the year 2000,—all of these entities belong in this class whether they be considered as objects of possible experience, that is, as sense-data for some possible subject, or as things-in-themselves behind such possible sense-data. If we define "existence" in one way, some of these entities may well exist. If we define it in another way, they are all forthwith unreal. If to "exist" is to be an actual object of sense-perception, these objects are of course unreal. But suppose we say that an entity to exist must be one such that it does not violate the law that there shall be at all times the same quantity of matter. Then, so far as this requirement is concerned, some of these objects that are not perceived may exist. Whatever definition of "reality" we light upon, the content of our world will be determined in large part by that definition. After we have once decided for ourselves what it shall mean to be "real," we shall in large measure know whether things-in-themselves are real and whether future objects and past ones are or are not real.

What we have just been considering have been entities

that I am not perceiving. Sometimes, however, we talk about objects that I am not thinking about. If I am not thinking about these objects at all, if they are in no wise objects of my consciousness, I do not see how I can hold any opinion at all about their existence or their non-existence. When we take independence in this very radical sense, I do not see how we can help but hold such propositions as: "There are entities of which I am in no wise conscious" to be self-contradictory. To think anything at all about an entity, that entity must in some sense be an object of my consciousness. I may not have its content in all of its concreteness before me, but there must be something in my consciousness that gives me a hold on this entity and enables me to call it "real" or "unreal." Let me suppose that yesterday I was thinking of Socrates drinking his cup of hemlock. To-day the definite content of yesterday's thought has utterly vanished. But I know that yesterday I was thinking of something. All that I can think of to-day in this matter of Socrates and his cup of hemlock is an indefinite something. I am not aware of the content of this something, specifically and distinctly, but I am aware of some of the properties of this something. I know perhaps that it is not a picture by Rembrandt, and I know that it was in all its concreteness the object of my thought yesterday. What I am thinking of is not a "nothing" that is without any content; it is an indefinite "something," an entity with some content but without any very full, definite, and concrete content. The question now arising is: "Do these indefinite "somethings" exist or do only definite objects exist? This, as I see it, is the question to which the controversy between realism and subjectivism reduces. These indefinite "somethings" are considered so very important that the theory that attributes reality to them is called by the general name: realism. So, for the early Schoolmen immaterial universals were the important entities, and the theory that attributes reality to them was called by the general name: realism.

Perhaps I ought to give another example. I am not a bacteriologist and it does not take me long to think over the few notions I have on that subject. So I go on to consider how many facts and theories are known to bacteriologists that I do not know. I am thinking about these

facts and theories that I am not aware of in all their definiteness as I am aware of the Copernican hypothesis. But these facts and theories that I am thinking about have some content. They are all about bacteria, their mode of life, their relation to chemical reactions, their effect on the taste of water, on the health of the human body. And they have the quality of being facts and theories that one could learn about if one read through the books on the subject in a well equipped library and conversed with the contemporary leaders in bacteriological research. But then I think of the many facts in this field that are not known and indeed never will be known in any specific definite fulness of content. For example, the number of bacteria there are in the world at this present moment is without doubt a fact that will never be known definitely. I think about this fact and others like it and what I am thinking about again has some content. These facts too are facts about bacteria, and facts that have the quality of never being concretely and definitely objects of consciousness. About the number of bacteria I know something, I know the number to be very, very large, and I know that the specific number,—whether the figure in the unit column is a four or a seven,—will never be known. I am thinking about an object with some content, but one that will never be an object of consciousness with any full and specific content.

Objects such as these, I say, are the objects that realism asserts exist and that subjectivism asserts do not exist. The quarrel between the two is not, as realists often think, over entities that are hard and not subject to remodelling at the hands of the thinking Ego; even a solipsist can consider an object inevitable during the time that it is definitely in consciousness. Nor is it, as subjectivists often think, over entities that are not being thought about. For an entity that is in no sense an object of my consciousness is simply unthinkable, beyond the possibility of consideration; and realism—what, at least, I think realism ought to be—is not a self-contradiction, it *does* have some meaning. But entities that are only vaguely and not definitely and specifically objects of my consciousness, they are the mischief-makers. Now shall we be realists or shall we be subjectivists? Shall we say that these indefinite "somethings" are real or shall we say that only definite entities are real?

The decision we reach will depend on the sense in which we are using the term "real." If I lay down as part of my definition of existence the requirement that an entity to be real must be in considerable detail an object of my consciousness, then I become a subjectivist forthwith. If I use "existence" in a sense that does not exclude such indefinite entities, I am a realist. Personally, I choose to use "existence" in a sense in which the term points not only to entities that are in their full detail objects of my consciousness, but also to entities that are, specifically, objects of some consciousness, though *I* am not aware of them except vaguely. That is, I shall define "existence" so as to make myself an objective idealist.

An entity is often said to be real if it is not dependent on my consciousness of it.[126] And an entity is independent on my consciousness of it if it persists when I am not thinking of it. What shall I say about the planet Mars? An hour ago I was not thinking about the planet Mars. Consequently if Mars existed an hour ago and has perdured through the intervening hour, Mars, according to this description of "existence," is real. Now the question of Mars' existence in the past and persistence up to the present is a question confronting me now. Shall I call the Mars of an hour ago real or shall I call it unreal? In answering this question the notion of existence I am discussing gives us no help. It may be held that such a notion of existence assumes that there *are* some entities that are to be called "existent," and so assumes the possibility of the Mars of an hour ago being real. Now the Mars of an hour ago is an object of my present consciousness; it was not an object of consciousness for a subject contemporaneous with it. And so I could not hold the Mars of an hour ago real if an entity to be real had to be the object of a consciousness contemporaneous with it. Such a requirement would make it impossible for this past Mars to be real, and so would make it impossible for there to be any "existent" entities according to the notion of "existence" we have undertaken to elucidate. Consequently the most that we can get out of this notion of existence is the assertion that an entity to be real need not be the object of a consciousness contem-

[126] Perry denies that the realist *defines* reality so.—New Realism, p. 117.

poraneous with it. Unless we draw from it, in addition, the inference that an entity to be real must be perduring through time.

What I have just given is one interpretation of independence on consciousness. But independence on consciousness is ambiguous, and the interpretation of the phrase I have just given is not the most usual one. We can lead up to another meaning of the phrase if we come back to our example of Socrates drinking his cup of hemlock. Yesterday I was thinking of him. To-day I have not been thinking of him, and indeed do not exactly recall what it was that I was thinking of yesterday. Now a real entity, let us recall, is one, it is said, that is independent on consciousnes. It is one that is there when I am not thinking about it. And so Socrates and his cup of hemlock are real if they are there now when I am not thinking about them. If I am not thinking about them at all, surely I can't say that they are there. I can't even talk about an entity that is in nowise an object of my consciousness without asserting a self-contradiction. It is not merely that an ego-centric predicament prevents me from going beyond the objects of my consciousness to entities that I can nevertheless assert to be there. What lends plausibility to the notion of an ego-centric predicament is the fact that some entities are only vaguely and indefinitely objects of my consciousness, that they look beyond themselves, so to speak, by being manifestly incomplete, unfinished, and vague. If then I am not thinking of Socrates and his cup of hemlock at all, I can say nothing about them. But suppose I am not thinking of them definitely, but am vaguely conscious of a "something" whose content is only to a slight degree determined. Let this be what I mean when I say that I am not thinking of Socrates and his cup of hemlock. Then there are real entities in the universe, according to this "realistic" notion of "existence," if Socrates is there now when I am conscious of a vague "something." But Socrates is "real," it is to be added, if, and only if, this vague "something" that is Socrates is real. There are "real" entities in the universe, that is to say, only if some of these vague "somethings" are real. Consequently realism amounts to the assertion that some of the indefinite objects of my consciousness exist. It implies a meaning of the

term "real" that does not exclude all of these indefinite objects from the group of entities denoted by it.

For the epistemological dualist any thing-in-itself will serve as an example of an indefinite "something." For when I have an "idea" of a thing-in-itself, that thing-in-itself can not be wholly outside the scope of my consciousness. If it were, I could not be aware of any of its properties, not even of its correspondence with my idea. It would be unthinkable. These trans-experiential entities, consequently, are not wholly trans-experiential. Their full and definite content is not experienced; but vaguely they are known—some of their qualities are objects of consciousness. And so these things-in-themselves belong to the class of indefinite "somethings." They can only be real if some of these indefinite "somethings" can be real.

Perhaps I am overbold in daring to deal so cavalierly and in such brief compass with such important subjects as the realist-subjectivist controversy and the notion of self-transcendent reference. But if I have not met all objections I have at least stated my opinion that the entities under dispute really are these indefinite "somethings" and not entities that are in no sense objects of my consciousness. And feeling as I do, I could not help listing this class of entities among the classes of entities whose reality depends on the definition of "real" that is implied. What common-sense thinks about the reality of these indefinite "somethings" is rather hard to determine. In general, I suppose, the realist is justified in claiming the support of the man in the street. Nevertheless, if an object is very inchoate and lacks all content I think in ordinary parlance it will be called "unreal." The God of a "negative theology" is, I think, in the ordinary usage of terms at the present time called "unreal;" and such a God is called "unreal" because such a God can not be grasped, has too little content. A supra-spatial God, on the other hand, that has the positive qualities of all goodness and almightiness, is "real" according to common parlance, though just as far removed from perception and just as surely not a member of the coherent system of experience. "Existence" must be given a more definite meaning than that which can be drawn from the customary use of the word before we can determine the ontological status of these vague and indefinite objects of conscious-

ness. But when a sufficiently definite meaning is given this term, the status of these objects will stand out clear.

All of the important philosophical questions I have just mentioned are questions of existence. They arise from the assertion of the existence and counter-assertion of the non-existence of one or another class of entities. And they can be resolved, and indeed intelligently discussed, only when we know what "existence" means. Now it has been my thesis that "existence" does not mean the same thing, or anything near the same thing, to all of us. We can not take the term as we find it used and extricate a definite meaningful collection of terms that will be equivalent to it. In those contexts in which the term does have a definite meaning, the meanings it has differ radically *inter se* from context to context and from writer to writer. Consequently when we find a context in which "existence" is given a definite meaning, we can not assert that the meaning found there is *the* meaning of "existence;" we can only say that it is the meaning of "existence" for the writer laying it down, and in the context in which it occurs. Each of these many definitions of "existence," none of which is *the* definition of "existence," determines the content of the existential universe. Each writer, in using "existence" in the sense in which he chooses to use it, is peopling the "real" world to suit himself. Consequently in one sense the "real" world is not objectively there; its contents depend on the sense in which we choose to use the word "real."

Since the earliest times of which we have record, philosophers have been engaged in investigating the nature of reality. They have for the most part regarded their task as a purely objective one. They have felt that reality was there and that their task was simply to discover it and to pick out its essential characteristics. They have made judgments about existence and reality; and they seem to have regarded these judgments as genuine discoveries, discoveries to be set forth in what Kant would call synthetic propositions. Yet if our thesis is correct, these judgments have implied an arbitrary and non-necessary definition of reality. They have not been judgments the validity of which is objectively discovered. They have been judgments that have followed from a definition of reality that has arbitrarily been assumed. Consequently an inquiry into

the nature of reality is in an essential particular a mere begging of the question. The metaphysician does not simply discover the nature of reality; he finds it to be what the particular definition he has tacitly assumed requires it to be. To be sure, in following out the implications of a given definition of reality, the metaphysician is dealing with what are genuinely objective facts. But in starting from one definition of reality rather than from another, he is introducing into his results an element that is by no means objective. There has in the past, however, been an almost universal failure to distinguish between these two elements. And so a considerable part of historical metaphysics has involved a confusion between definitions and propositions of fact.

Let us, however, recognize this necessary distinction, and let us set ourselves to the task of defining reality. How then shall we use the term "real"? We ought not to use it in a sense entirely different from any in which it has ever been used before. To do so would be to cut ourselves off from any possible readers and to prevent ourselves from being taken seriously. But some specific definition of "existence" is essential. For since so many of our judgments are existential judgments, unless "existence" is given some specific meaning, these judgments are vague, indefinite and worthless. And without some specific definition of existence, moreover, the ontological status of those classes of entities that have been troubling philosophy must remain undetermined.

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VITA.

I, Alvin Thalheimer, was born in Baltimore on July 13, 1894. After attending the public schools of Baltimore and spending one year at Johns Hopkins, I went to Harvard where, in 1914, I received the degree of bachelor of arts *cum laude* in Economics. It was under the influence of a fellow-student at Harvard, one who was always earnest and enthusiastic, though the object of his enthusiasm was now anarchism, now socialism, now Nietzsche and now Schopenhauer, that I came to consider more earnestly the purpose of life and to feel the importance of ethics. At Johns Hopkins where I was a graduate student in philosophy under Professor Lovejoy, from 1914 to 1916, I learned to appreciate the interest and significance of the problems of epistemology and metaphysics. Ethics still seems to me the most important branch of philosophy; but metaphysics has come to engross my attention to a very considerable extent. During the summer season of 1915 and during the year 1916-1917, I studied at Columbia under Professors Dewey, Woodbridge, Montague, Bush, Costello, and H. C. Brown. In September, 1917, I returned to Johns Hopkins, where I have completed my work for a doctor's degree. Besides my principal field of study, philosophy, I have done graduate work in political economy and political science.

I am particularly indebted to Professor Lovejoy under whose direction my studies in philosophy have been carried out. He has tried hard to make me critical and circumspect in dealing with philosophical problems and to make me keen and acute in analysis. I am also grateful to the members of the department of philosophy at Columbia and to my fellow-students at Columbia and at Johns Hopkins for having helped to make my four years as a graduate student most instructive and most enjoyable.

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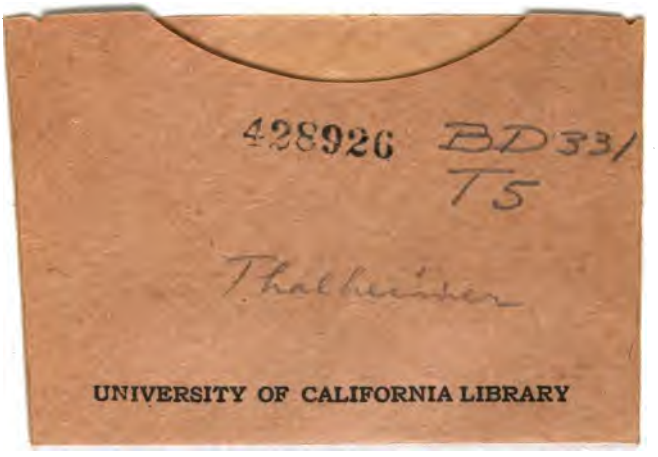
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